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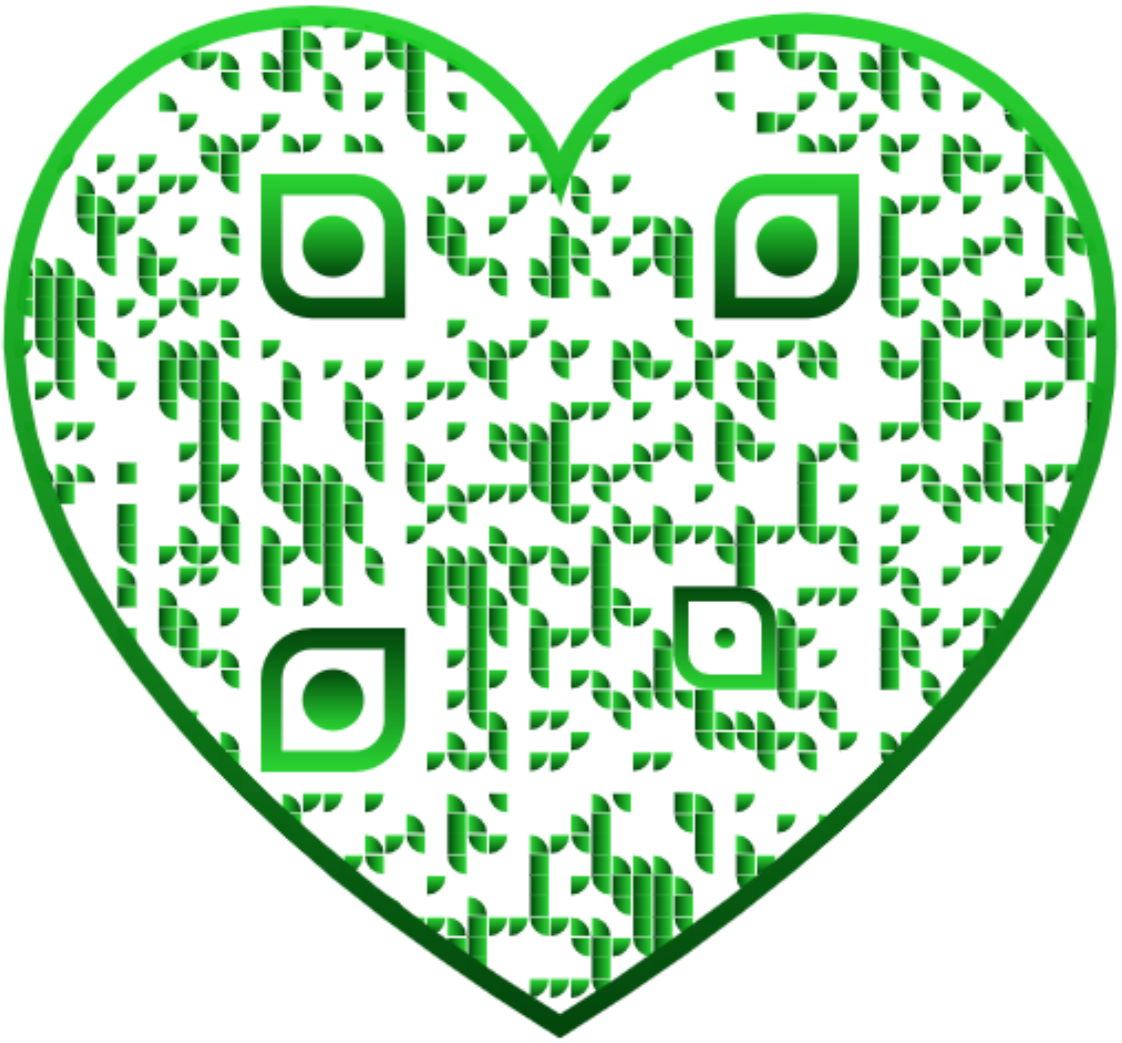

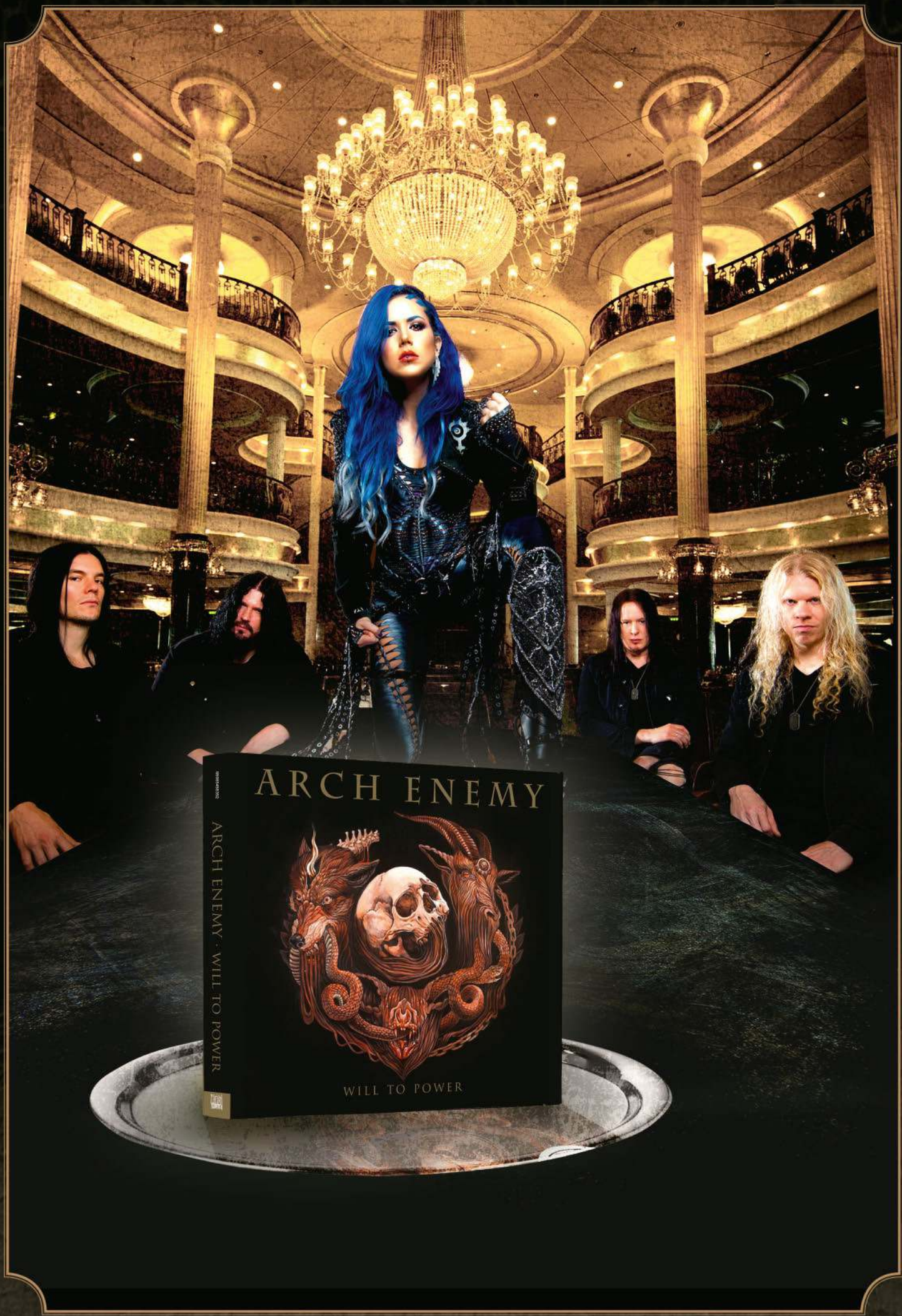
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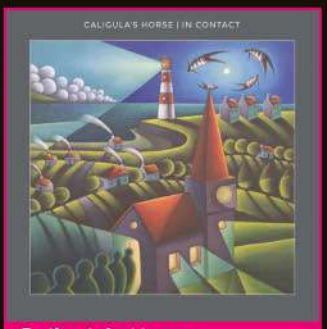

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KOYO
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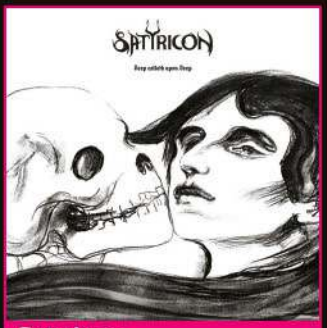
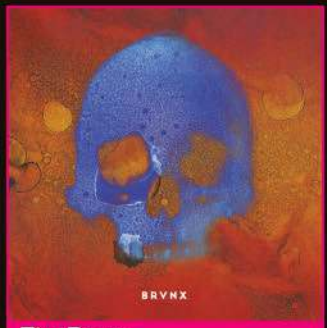


Satyricon
Deep Calleth Upon Deep
out 22 September on CD & vinyl
The legendary Norwegian black metallers make a welcome return with their awesome ninth studio release.



The Bronx
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out 22 September on CD & vinyl
Hardcore veterans The Bronx now unleash their new and overtly political album. Includes the singles Sore Throat and Two Birds.

Wolves In The Throne Room
Thrice Woven
out 22 September on CD & vinyl
WITTR re-imagine black metal as an ode to rain storms, wood smoke and the wild energies of the Pacific Northwest. Featuring Neurosis' Steve Von Till.

Grave Pleasures
Motherblood
out 29 September on CD & vinyl
This new album embraces the band's apocalyptic roots while taking their raw sound and songwriting to fierce new heights.

King Creature
Volume One
out 29 September on CD & vinyl
The debut release from Cornwall's King Creature is the embodiment of rock & roll with powerful metal overtones.

Unsane
Sterilize
out 29 September on CD
With the release of Sterilize which is surging with their unrelenting singular sound, Unsane make a vicious return to the music scene.

Marilyn Manson
Heaven Upside Down
out 6 October on CD & vinyl
The tenth studio album from Marilyn Manson contains some of his most politically charged and powerful lyrics yet.

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THY ART IS MURDER

CJ McMahon opens up about kicking his drug habit and returning to the band. Suicide Silence had better watch their backs...

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As the German mega-label celebrates three decades of heavy, we party with Epica, Hatebreed and more in Bavaria.

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BOSTON HARDCORE

From the fights and the fury of early hardcore rose a bunch of bands like no other. From Cave In to Converge, this is the scene's secret story.

YEAAAH-YEEAAAAA-HUUUH!

Sorry, bit overexcited there. Can you blame us, though? This month *Metal Hammer* not only got to go across the pond to be front and centre for the single biggest show of 2017, but we also got to hang out backstage with the biggest band in metal itself. Metallica are on blinding form right now, ladies and gentlemen, make no mistake about it – make sure you check out Clay Marshall's feature on page 32 to find out firsthand what it takes to put together the greatest show on Earth, and how their plans for the UK next month are going to be just a little different.

Delve a little further below the depths, however, and you'll quickly find it's not just metal's big guns that are doing exciting things. This month, we herald the dawn of the Age Of Extreme: celebrating the return of some of the underground's most important names while also drawing your attention to the new wave of bands that are taking extreme music screaming into the future. There's a revolution going on down there, and as always, *Hammer* is proud to be at the front of it. Horns up, cheers for being with us and don't forget to...

KEEP IT HEAVY

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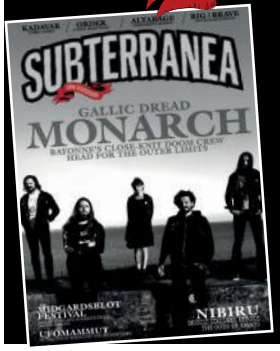

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Metal Hammer Stereo

Albums crushing our stereo this month... and our favourite Metallica gigs ever

MYRKUR
MARERIDT

"Webster Hall, NY last year. Opening with *Breadfan*?! Behave yourself."
MERLIN ALDERSLADE
EDITOR

MARILYN MANSON
HEAVEN UPSIDE DOWN

"Leeds festival 2003. My first time."
ELEANOR GOODMAN
DEPUTY EDITOR

GRAVE PLEASURES
MOTHERBLOOD

"My first time: secret gig at the Marquee, 1990."
JONATHAN SELZER
REVIEWS EDITOR

GRAVE PLEASURES
MOTHERBLOOD

"The 1,000-capacity LA2 in 1995. Truly incredible night!"
VANESSA THORPE
PRODUCTION EDITOR

WILSON
FULL BLAST FUCKERY

"House of Vans last November by a whole mile."
LEWIS SOMERSCALES
ART EDITOR

MYRKUR
MARERIDT

"Download festival 2006. My first time."
LUKE MORTON
ONLINE EDITOR

NOCTURNAL RITES
PHOENIX

"1988. Hammy Odeon. Justice tour. Bonus Danzig."
DOM LAWSON
EDITOR-AT-LARGE

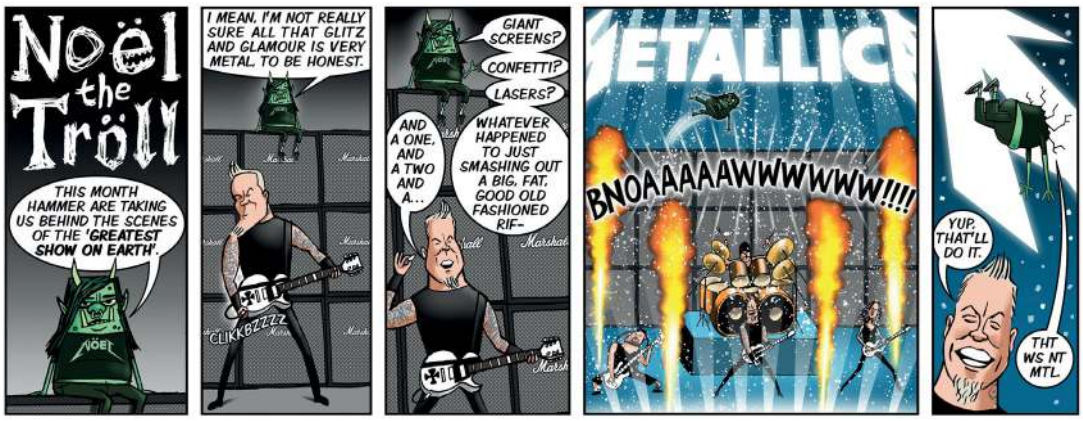
The shocking deaths of Chris Cornell and Chester Bennington have people asking for better discourse on mental health. This month, we asked you...

HOW CAN WE LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER?

We can all take a good look at ourselves before bullying people online based on their musical tastes. What you find "shit" may have helped other people battle their demons. Think about that before you shitpost.
LUCY McCRAE

I struggle with depression. No one knows it's happening unless I ask for help. That's what the metal community needs to understand: it's OK to ask for help. You don't have to project the image of a badass 24/7. The more you try denying your demons the harder they are going to get you.
GREG HAFNER

Ongoing discussion is the key to destigmatisation. Maybe a monthly *Hammer* column that addresses issues in the community with a metal musician who lives with mental illness would be cool. You could talk about the musician's struggles along with the stigma around whichever illness is being discussed. I know many metal musicians have lost loved ones to



BAND RESPONSE

"It's a complex issue, but first and foremost we have to normalise it and recognise that there are a great many people suffering from these kinds of mental health problems. They're not weird or pussies like, unfortunately, many metal people would have you believe. That's why I started talking about it. People can look at my posts and say I'm a crybaby or whatever but I don't care, I'm doing it for the people that need it. And there are many; some that don't even realise they're suffering. It's such a shame that so many people who were connected to this music by the fact that they don't fit in and they don't feel normal have to take this abuse within our scene, but those people are just scared, they're posers, and all we can do is to keep having the conversation in magazines and in our lives to make sure people understand that it isn't a weakness."
JESSE LEACH, KILLSWITCH ENGAGE

suicide and addiction. In a way, the suffering from mental conditions is a catalyst for the passion behind metal. It's ever-present in the community and yet seldom addressed.
ABBY BUCHANAN

It's tough, as there is a risk of glamourising mental health. It is ingrained into this type of music, which is why it attracts those that feel a disconnect. And, for a teenager especially, I think feeling like you're just like that tragic soulful artist you idolise can be dangerous. But, on the flipside, it helps to know you're not alone. Music can help those who are depressed and help let them get heard, feel less alone and give words to confusing feelings, but it's not a 'cure' for those with a mental illness – it's an *illness*, that kills.
ERIN-LEA MURPHY

Even a feature like this is a good thing. I have depression and it's nice to see and talk to others who have gone through or are going through it. The fact is that, unfortunately, not everyone is going to understand, but I think another sad fact is that some people do refuse help and then it becomes a struggle because others will blame themselves when in reality they are doing all they can. It took me the longest time to start talking about it and it is slowly helping. I'm far from the finished article but slow progress is better than no progress.
ANDY LOWERY

HAVE YOUR SAY AND JOIN THE DEBATE AT WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/METALHAMMER

I definitely think metal music helps a lot of people. I remember Robb Flynn saying a lot of his fans come and tell him that the live version of *Crashing Around You* with the extended intro helped a lot of them realise they weren't alone. We could all do more, though.
SIDGE RUSHTON

I only ever seem to see anything about it in the metal scene after someone has a meltdown or takes their own life. Ginger Wildheart is very open about his struggles and the work he does trying to raise awareness. I was lucky in that he personally sat down with me a few months back and gave me some really good advice on things after I tried to take my own life. Unless you've experienced life on the road, you'll never understand how easy it is for artists to start struggling with things.
ALEUTIA SHANNON

Find the artists who give you a feeling of love or caring in the world. For example, listening to Killswitch Engage and Lamb Of God helped me through a lot of stuff in the past, mentally. Music is a tool you should use to get inner feelings and emotions out. Playing music is an even better way of achieving self-serenity. Playing and performing music through my teenage years kept me from doing a lot of harmful drugs and activities. I've never even smoked a cigarette in my entire life and I thank the love of guitar and singing for that as it consumed the vast majority of my time and thinking.
BRANDON BISHOP

NEXT MONTH: DOES METAL NEED TO LIGHTEN THE FUCK UP?

METAL HAMMER

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THE FOX GOD ARMY RISES

PROVING ONCE MORE that they're one of the most unique bands to ever hit our world, Babymetal held the first ever Five Fox Festival over nine dates across Japan this summer. With each date having different rules for attendance that included male-only, female-only, teens-only and, as in this shot taken from one of two shows at Tokyo's DiverCity Plaza, a corpsepaint dress code, it was a chance for Su-Metal, Yuimetal and Moametal to do something a little different. "Because the theme for all five events are all different, the audience was completely different each time, and seeing these changes have been extremely fun for us!" says Su-Metal "What was really interesting about the audience changing every time was that, based on age and gender, the reaction was completely different. I really hope we can do more of these events in the future." We can only imagine what bonkers stuff they come up with next, quite frankly. ✠

TAKU FUJII

CHRIS JERICHO

FOZZY

The flamboyant frontman explains why he thinks *Judas* could carry Fozzy to greatness

WORDS: MERLIN ALDERSLADE • PIC: MICK HUTSON

THE *JUDAS* VIDEO GOT AN UNBELIEVABLE RESPONSE. THAT MUST HAVE BEEN NICE!

"Yeah, it's been our most successful single ever! It's charted higher than anything else we've done, the video's on over seven million views so far, it's been crazy. I was talking to Synyster Gates and Johnny Christ, because the first show of this *Judas* tour was back in May with Avenged. They listened to the song, they both thought it was awesome, and they said, 'This is a lot of goodwill building up for you guys. Everyone knows you've been out touring, everyone's pulling for you guys, and you gave them the right song at the right time.' What we're also getting is a lot of people that haven't heard us before giving us a try, and they gave us a try on what is, in my opinion, our best song!"

YOU OPENED UP THE MAIN STAGE AT DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL THIS YEAR – HOW WAS THAT?

"It was 11 o' clock in the morning. You'll take the main stage over anything, but at that time it's like, 'Is anyone gonna be there?' But they came and there were, like, 30,000 people there, and they all came to see Fozzy! So there's a lot of people coming to see us and a lot of people discovering us, and that's a good place to be in. It's a perfect storm."

IT'S GONNA BE FIVE MONTHS BETWEEN *JUDAS* THE SINGLE AND *JUDAS* THE ALBUM. DID YOU ALWAYS INTEND TO LEAVE IT THAT LONG?

"Well, it's funny, because Metallica released *Hardwired* in, like, August last year, and that album came out in November. Obviously, we're not Metallica, but there was a three-month gap there. The reason *Judas* the song came out when it did is because we had the tours booked, we wanted to reintroduce people to Fozzy, and the album wasn't ready yet. But there are many more songs as good as *Judas* on the album. It's weird because the record company didn't even want *Judas* to be the first single. There's three or four more songs on there that could work – if this was 1987, we'd have five singles off there, ha ha! Every band will tell you that their next record is their best ever, and I'm saying that now, but I promise you, if you like what you've heard so far, you'll like this record. It's just as hooky and just as dark."

"WE'LL DESTROY YOUR FUCKING STAGE"

DO YOU FEEL LIKE THE STARS ARE ALIGNING FOR THIS ALBUM? THERE'S DEFINITELY A MASSIVE BUZZ AROUND IT COMPARED TO ANYTHING FOZZY HAVE PUT OUT SO FAR.

"I think so. *Metal Hammer* have been super-supportive, and there have been a lot of bands that have been supporting us, too. Avenged Sevenfold, Zakk Wylde, Corey Taylor, Alter Bridge... that's all paying off now, and we're not taking any of that lightly. We're coming out swinging at all times and at all costs, no matter what. We're still getting bookings where we're fucking third on the fourth stage, and that's fine, we don't give a shit. We'll destroy your fucking stage! You have to put in the work, and we're doing that, and it's gonna pay off more than it ever has."

IT CERTAINLY FEELS LIKE THE DAYS OF THIS BEING SEEN AS A CHRIS JERICHO SIDE PROJECT ARE DWINDLING.

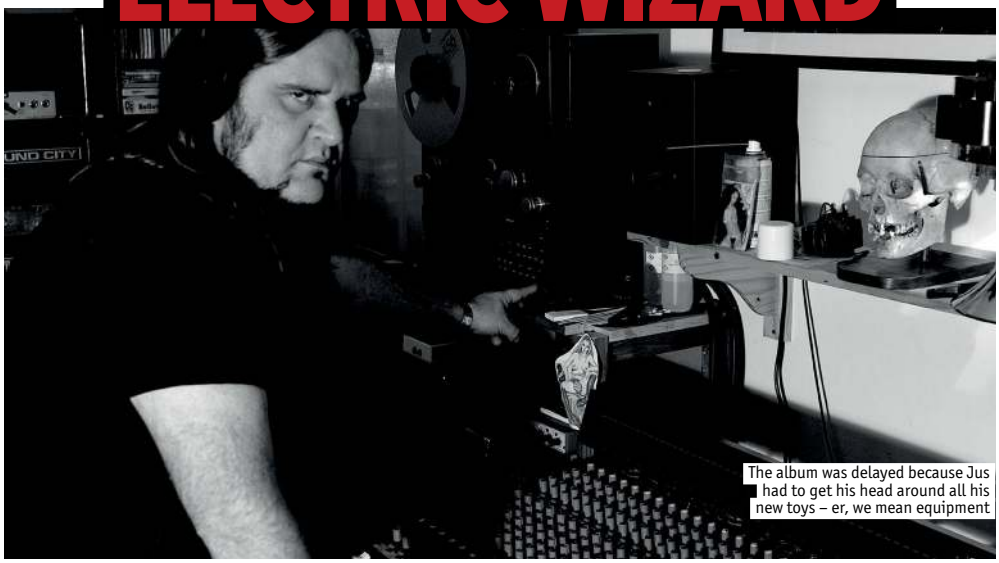
"Yes! Everyone thought I was gonna do a run-in at the NXT thing at Download, but that would have just been weird for me to do right now. It's not where I should be, it'd feel very strange. And this has never been 'Chris Jericho And Band'. It's never been promoted that way, and I fucking hate it when people try to promote it that way. We did a UK show recently, it sold straight out, but then they put a poster up saying 'SOLD OUT – FOZZY, FEATURING CHRIS JERICHO FROM WWE!' I was like, 'Why the fuck have you put that on there? It's already sold out anyway!' That's why on our main promo pictures, you see [guitarist] Rich Ward in the middle. It's five guys." ✠

***JUDAS* IS OUT ON OCTOBER 13 VIA CENTURY MEDIA**

Fozzy are levelling up with *Judas*

In The Studio

ELECTRIC WIZARD



The album was delayed because Jus had to get his head around all his new toys – er, we mean equipment

Devon's doom dispensers are switching up the formula

WORDS: MATT MILLS

THE FACTS

ALBUM:
Wizard Bloody Wizard

PRODUCER:
Jus Oborn and Liz Buckingham

STUDIO:
Satyr IX, Devon

EXPECT:
Mind-bending psychedelia and bluesy rock'n'roll

IN THE FINAL weeks before the release of their ninth album, *Wizard Bloody Wizard*, it's clear that sludgy Brits Electric Wizard are a different band from when they last entered the studio. They've got a new, home-built recording space, a new rhythm section and a new sound, so we asked frontman Jus Oborn to help us unravel the mysteries of their enigmatic next step.

WHY DID YOU NEED YOUR OWN STUDIO FOR THIS ALBUM?
"I've always wanted to record my own music instead of trusting somebody else to do it. After producing a few things myself, I started to see that there was a way that I could get a studio. I was just waiting for room and costs to come down."

ORIGINALLY, *WIZARD BLOODY WIZARD* HAD THE LOOSE RELEASE DATE OF AUTUMN 2016. WAS IT MAKING THE STUDIO THAT CAUSED THE DELAY, OR SOMETHING ELSE?
"Learning how to use the equipment took forever. Then there's the cost of tape machines: I recorded it on analogue tape, and tape machines are old and a bit temperamental, ha ha! Unless you've been an expert for years, it's quite easy to fuck it up! But I don't want to construct my music after the fact or be able to edit it. I like the rawness of getting it onto tape."

YOU'VE SAID THIS ALBUM WILL BE LESS METAL AND MORE BLUESY AND ATMOSPHERIC. WHAT MADE YOU GO WITH THAT CHANGE?
"I think we may have become formulaic at one point. We're trying to move away from that. We're just writing songs in an original way, jamming with new rhythms and sounds, rather than trying to imagine the finished song. I like the idea of attacking blues again, to reinterpret it."

DID YOU ACTIVELY SEARCH FOR A DIFFERENT SOUND?
"I think the last album was our final say in that style. There was a subconscious shift as well – with the new lineup we've got a much better rhythm section and a lot more going on. It added a new dimension to the songwriting."

THE TITLE SOUNDS LIKE A BLACK SABBATH HOMAGE...
"It's definitely an homage, but it's also a statement: We are the Wizard. We're fucking here. We ain't dead yet! Ha ha!" ✠

"WE GOT TOO FORMULAIC"

JUS OBORN IS BREAKING OUT OF THE WIZARD MOULD

***WIZARD BLOODY WIZARD* IS OUT OCTOBER 20 VIA WITCHFINDER**

10 Things We Learned This Month

WHAT'S ROCKED OUR WORLD AND BLOWN OUR TINY MINDS?

1. EXTREME METAL IS DEFINITELY TAKING OVER
The underground is currently in world-beating shape. The proof's on page 41.

2. BLOODSTOCK IS GETTING BETTER AND BETTER
The UK's premier metal fest smashed it yet again. Head over to page 102 to find out who ruled Catton this year.

3. ARCHITECTS ARE THE UK'S MOST VITAL BAND
Heavy music was mostly marginalised on the main stage of Reading and Leeds, but Architects were a beacon of brilliance. Ally Pally will be glorious.

4. NO COVER IS TOO FAR FOR A7X
The fucking Beach Boys?! What are the Avenged boys smoking?! That said, we can't wait to see what they do next.

5. SÓLSTAFIR NEED TO BE BOOKED AT A BIG UK FESTIVAL
Seriously, they're awesome. We want them at Download or Bloodstock. Someone make it happen!

6. LIFE AFTER *GAME OF THRONES* SUCKS
We've basically just spent the last few weeks twiddling our thumbs and waiting for *Stranger Things* season 2. And we're supposed to wait until 2019?!

7. ALEISTER BLACK IS THE MOST METAL WRESTLER EVER
From being played to the ring at an NXT event by Code Orange to repping Venom Prison, Big Al is metal as fuck.

8. MUD WON'T STOP METALHEADS
As you'll see on page 104, nothing could stop Wacken having a hell of a time.

9. WE WANNA BE BAPTISED BY PAPA E
That Ghost video for *He Is* had us all feeling proper spiritual. What a band.

10. MASTODON LOVE TO SURPRISE US
We're still spinning *Emperor Of Sand* and Masto drop a whole new EP on us?! We're not complaining, mind.

Aleister Black: none more metal

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Deep calleth upon Deep

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16.10.17 UK - GLASGOW / O2 ABC
18.10.17 UK - BELFAST / THE LIMELIGHT
19.10.17 IR - DUBLIN / ACADEMY
20.10.17 UK - WOLVERHAMPTON / WOLFRUN HALL
21.10.17 UK - MANCHESTER / THE RITZ
22.10.17 UK - BUCKLEY / TIVOLI
24.10.17 UK - CARDIFF / TRAMSHED
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THE STORY BEHIND THE SONG

Buckcherry

CRAZY BITCH

Frontman Josh Todd on the track that lit up a thousand rock clubs

WORDS: RICHARD CHAMBERLAIN • ILLUSTRATION: MATT DIXON

IT WAS INSPIRED BY PARIS HILTON

"I wrote *Crazy Bitch* a cappella in my truck. I wrote it a long time before we released it [on 2006 album *15*]. It was right around the time that the Paris Hilton sex tapes came out. I thought it was funny how somebody could launch their entire entertainment career on a homemade porn tape. Then I started reminiscing about all the crazy chicks that I used to go out with. It seemed that from the time when I was about 18 to when I was about 23 I couldn't really find a sane girl anywhere. They were all really, really good in bed but they weren't great girlfriends. I just started singing that melody and I didn't want to forget it. It was super-easy and I wanted it to be a simple song. I called Keith [Nelson, former Buckcherry guitarist] to record me singing it on his answer machine because this was in the days before things like iPhones!"

IT WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BE A SINGLE

"It was just another song. We made a really great record and *Crazy Bitch* was kind of an afterthought. We thought we would resurrect it; it wasn't quite finished, we still had work to do. We thought it would be a cool record song for our core fans and that there would be no way that it could get on the radio or anything like that. We didn't even think about it like that. Once the record came out, it started really taking off online. This was when MySpace was going on and it had a million listens on there. We were like, 'This is crazy!' Radio stations started to play it and it became this phenomenon."

IT HELPED BUCKCHERRY COME BACK FROM THE BRINK

"We recorded a demo of it. This was when it was just Keith and me in the band, because from the first line-up, all of the guys had quit except for Keith and me. What happens when you're in those moments is that everybody becomes very focused on the goal. It becomes a collective thought and when you have collective thought with a bunch of people it becomes very powerful and it can't be stopped."

"WE WANTED IT TO BE LIKE A HIP-HOP SONG"

WE HAD TO FIGHT TO KEEP IT X-RATED

"There was a pretty well-known producer back in the day who heard the song and said, 'Oh, that's a pretty good song but you've got to change the lyrics.' I said I didn't want to change the lyrics. That was what was great about the song – the lyrics were what was so fun about it! You change those lyrics and it becomes just another fuckin' stupid song. We didn't change the lyrics. We sat on the song for a long time until finally it was the right time and place to release it."

IT HAS HIP-HOP ROOTS

"The song really wrote itself. It was super-simple. I wanted it to be like a hip-hop song, almost. That's how I described it to Keith when I was trying to get it all together. I always wanted to take that song and collaborate with a hip-hop artist and remix it. That would be really fun. I think the sex, drugs and rock'n'roll has all gone into hip-hop; I don't see any of that in rock'n'roll anymore."

IT BECAME A STRIP CLUB ANTHEM

"I want any kind of anthem, so I'm happy [that it became a popular strip club song choice]. You work your whole life to have a hit. Wherever the song wants to be heard, that is fantastic for me. There was nothing that indicated that the record would be a success. No one would sign that album. It was a force that could not be stopped; there was no other option for us other than to be successful at that time. There's nothing like success when you've heard so many nos." ✠

JOSH TODD & THE CONFLICT'S DEBUT ALBUM, *YEAR OF THE TIGER*, IS OUT NOW VIA CENTURY MEDIA

C B
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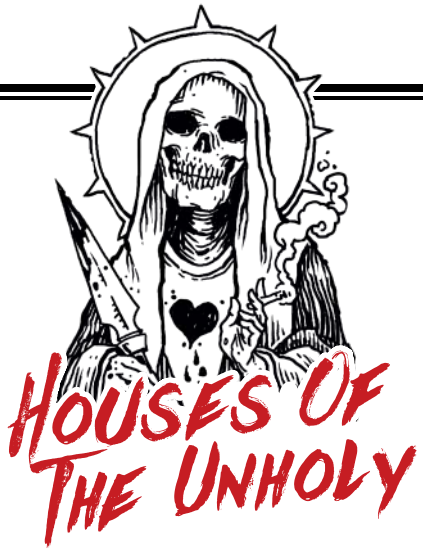

PEAVY WAGNER

RAGE

The frontman of the vintage German metal heroes bloody loves bones. No, really!

WORDS: ALI COOPER

SO, PEAVY, HOW DID THIS BONE COLLECTION BEGIN? YOU'VE GOT LOADS OF THEM!

"I was four years old when first I started. My very first specimen was my pet golden hamster. Hamsters don't last for very long, so I buried his body in my sandpit, then I got curious what his bones would look like so I dug him out again later. My father was a biology teacher and he kept animal skulls from his studies, so I knew what they looked like from an early age. I studied bone preparation for three years at a school in Germany, focusing on biological preparation and taxidermy."

DID YOUR INTERESTS IN THE INTERNAL WORKINGS OF ANIMALS INFLUENCE THE SKULLS WE SEE ON MOST RAGE ALBUM SLEEVES?

"The metal jaw skull was invented by my friend Joachim Luetke, who did our album covers over the years. I handcrafted the specimen for our latest album cover *Seasons Of The Black*; it's made from silicone and resin from a cast of an 11th century Incan skull I have. In Incan society, the wealthier population had a fascination with long skulls; they bound the heads of their babies so they would grow into this elongated skull."

The skeleton in Peavy's closet

"I DUG UP MY DEAD HAMSTER"

YOUR COLLECTION LOOKS A BIT CREEPY...

"It's not morbid to me! It's always been a scientific interest of mine to see how all these creatures across the world look under their skin, to understand how their morphological elements have developed. You can show me a skull from any animal and I can tell you right away how the animal lived and what kind of space it covered. The bones can tell you everything about their previous owner."

WHERE DO YOU KEEP THIS ENORMOUS STASH?

"It's a private museum in my attic because it's so big – it takes up more space than other people have for themselves! I've made sure it's big enough to become a workplace where I can make my casts and prepare the bones."

DO YOU HAVE MANY ISSUES SOURCING BONES FOR YOUR HOARD?

"Some of this stuff is quite expensive, I can tell you! That's why I specialise in casting bones in resin – some bones are so rare it's impossible to buy them so it's good enough to get a casting. I take great care when importing bones that are protected – you need to have the right papers to make sure it's legal or you've got big problems. Sometimes I pick up bones at customs to take them home and I get some strange looks."

WHAT ARE THE RAREST ITEMS IN YOUR BONE COLLECTION?

"I have a lot of Ice Age bones, even a femoral bone and parts of a skull from a neanderthal. I got them from a friend who wasn't sure what they were, but he knew they were hominid bones. I only discovered how old they were when I took them to a professor from an anthropological institute here in Germany. I got them for a great price, but what price can you put on something so rare?"

HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED TAKING THIS HOBBY PROFESSIONAL?

"Bone preparation is a hard job to make a living from. I'd need a job in a museum, so perhaps it's better for me to stay as a professional musician. Sometimes I do preparation and skeleton moulding for museums in the area, but I couldn't live on it."

ON A SCALE OF 1-10, HOW METAL IS OWNING A BADASS BONE COLLECTION?

"It's a cliché connection with metal and skulls but I don't think it's connected to my music. I don't think I'm any more metal because I collect bones – I collected this shit long before I even knew what metal was!" ✠

***SEASONS OF THE BLACK* IS OUT NOW VIA NAPALM. RAGE WILL BE ON TOUR THROUGHOUT 2018**

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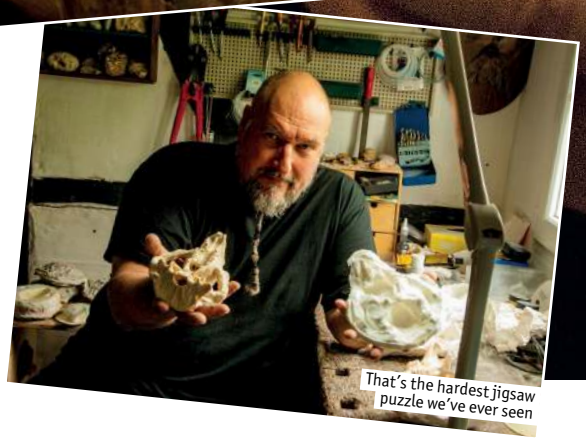
That's the hardest jigsaw puzzle we've ever seen

GET INVOLVED

THE TRAINING

Peavy recommends learning professional bone preparation techniques before starting a collection. Buying specimens ready prepared costs a lot more than treating them yourself. Start your search for bioarchaeology courses through WhatUni at tinyurl.com/ybjk75xy.

THE SEARCH

Online auction sites are your friends when starting a bone collection. Learn the right keywords – and research what these bones would normally look like before buying. Before you start, you *must* read up on what you can and can't legally buy.

THE NETWORK

Peavy Wagner has a network of friends that trade bones and fossils to keep up to date with sales and trending topics. Scour social media for groups dedicated to your interests to find some helpful connections and ensure you pay the right price for your items.

ZORNHEYM

A symphonic burst of dark metal escapism

WORDS: DOM LAWSON

SOUNDS LIKE:
A vicious new strain of wilfully OTT symphonic extreme metal

FOR FANS OF:
Dimmu Borgir, Children Of Bodom, Wintersun

LISTEN TO:
The Opposed

METAL IS NO stranger to grandiose notions and musical extravagance, but few albums in recent years have come close to the intricate horrors of Zornheym's debut album, *Where Hatred Dwells And Darkness Reigns*. A disturbing, intricate concept album set in the fictional mental institution of Zornheim, it's an explosive showcase for the Swedes' symphonic melo-death attack and a real treat for fans of horror, sci-fi and comics too.

"Each song presents one of the more infamous inmates in the asylum and how they came to be incarcerated," says lead guitarist Zorn. "The physical album will include a further look at the inmates through their medical records written by the head doctor at the facility, Dr Bettelheim. Each inmate is also brought to life in a graphic novel that we're making together with the super-talented Finnish artist Anu Bring. So the concept offers a lot of different layers for the listener to discover. This album is an introduction to the asylum, and the next album will let you travel deeper into the chaos..."

Clearly fans of unearthing the devil in the details, Zornheym are the snarling antithesis of many of today's visually nondescript metal bands. From its stunning artwork to the furious complexity of its concept, *Where Hatred Dwells...* is a ferociously visual affair and, not entirely surprisingly, indicates that Zorn and his bandmates are nerds *extraordinaire*. For the guitarist, though, it's simply a matter of doing things properly.

"Every medium for experiencing the concept is necessary to create an immersive world for the listener to explore with their other senses," he states. "We're lucky to know so many creative people that have been eager to help us by lending their skills to bringing the visual side alive. I'm a *huge* King Diamond fan and it was his albums that got me into the whole concept album idea, but there have been a wide array of influences. For instance, when I wrote the lyrics to the first three songs for the album, I was playing a magnificent atmospheric horror game called *The Evil Within*, and I remember that its environment really sparked my imagination."

"WE WANT TO CREATE AN IMMERSIVE WORLD"

RECORDED AT WING Studio in Sweden with Sverker Widgren, *Where Hatred Dwells...* has been in the works for a long time, largely due to the astonishing number of instruments being used on each song. The end result sounds suitably massive, but Zorn admits that his ambitious urges haven't always been helpful.

"Sverker ended up mixing 300 channels for each song, so as you can imagine the album got delayed several times due to the amount of work!" the guitarist smirks. "He really put the work in throughout and we're incredibly grateful for the amazing results. It was all a difficult album to create but also an extremely fun album to make."

Given the intense level of creative overload on display on their debut album, Zornheym are plainly not a band content to limit the potential of any aspect of their art. As Zorn avows, this band are determined to aim high and deliver something truly spectacular, particularly when it comes to live shows and spreading this elaborate madness around the world.

"Eventually we hope to perform all the music entirely live, with no backing tracks and everything performed by a live orchestra and choir," he says. "We want to offer people the show that I think our music deserves. Our love for the theatrical element is already obvious in our music video for *The Opposed*, and we've been going overboard with what we'd eventually like to do once we've established ourselves. A theatrical element adds so much more to a live experience. We have some plans in action for some *really* exciting stuff, but you're not going to find out about that just yet..." ✠

***WHERE HATRED DWELLS AND DARKNESS REIGNS* IS OUT NOW VIA NON SERVIAM**

Zornheym are exploring the art of madness

Less Art have hit a home run with their first release

LESS ART

Pummelling post-hardcore with serious pedigree

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

SOUNDS LIKE:
Classic early-00s post-hardcore put on downers and made angry

FOR FANS OF:
Cave In, Misery Signals, These Arms Are Snakes

LISTEN TO:
Diana The Huntress

MUSIC IS DESIGNED to be fun, but even the silliest bands should take their art seriously. Often, bands can form out of nothing more than a desire to muck around before developing into something vital, and few bands offer more significant proof of this than post-hardcore crew Less Art.

"We formed out of this online-only, baseball-themed grindcore band," explains vocalist Mike Minnick. "We were originally called Puig Destroyer, which is a play on words to Pig Destroyer and [Los Angeles Dodgers outfielder] Yasiel Puig, and it was really just an excuse to make some fun music about baseball. But after a while we decided that we really enjoyed playing together and that maybe we should make a go of writing some more serious music and do something for real that wasn't so much of a joke."

"WE STARTED AS BASEBALL-THEMED GRINDCORE"

The bandmates he is talking about comprise of members of Thrice and Kowloon Walled City, and Mike himself used to be in metallic hardcore heroes Curl Up And Die. With that kind of pedigree in their ranks, the guys in this new endeavour knew they had to create something to live up to their previous work.

"We didn't know if it was going to sound heavy, like Kowloon Walled City," says Mike, "or more like melodic like Thrice, or more aggressive like the stuff I used to do in Curl Up And Die. Fortunately, we just messed around and let it happen organically; it was kind of cool, because it's ended up sounding like none of those bands."

WHAT IT DOES sound like can be heard on Less Art's debut album, *Strangled Light*, a record that takes the sound of early-00s post-hardcore and fuses it with ambient passages and massive dollops of squealing feedback and pummelling riffs. It's a world away from wacky baseball puns and simple grindcore done for the hell of it; it feels like a record with much more on its mind.

"We still wanna have fun, but this is a darker, more serious record," Mike continues. "I want to get the things out that I don't really understand about myself and the world around me."

In fact, unfortunately for us all, the dark and depressing scenarios his lyrics paint on *Wandering Ghost* have proved prophetic.

"America was not where it is at now," sighs Mike. "We recorded before the results of the election and it's weird to see how the record came out because it was kind of written about my fears of what could happen and now it just looks like an account of what *has* happened. It's very odd."

With this in mind, it's hard to see why they picked the name Less Art, when feeding their artistic and creative flair seems to be the band's primary goal.

"The band name is a quote from Shakespeare," Mike explains. "'Less art, more matter' – that was the inspiration for this music. Get to the stuff, less messing around. For me, as a vocalist, it was about being more direct instead of goofing around."

No messing indeed. Less Art are serious, and seriously good. ✠

***STRANGLED LIGHT* IS OUT NOW VIA GILEAD MEDIA**

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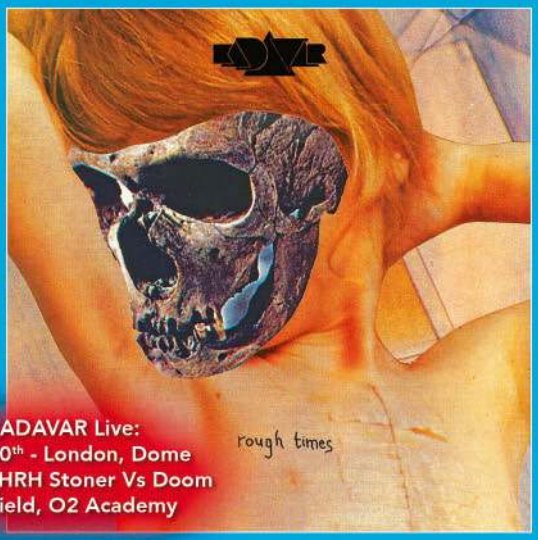

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Vanity: putting everything into *Perspective*

VANITY

Shining a light on the future of deathcore

WORDS: HYWEL DAVIES

SOUNDS LIKE:
Soul-punching deathcore with big ambition

FOR FANS OF:
Thy Art Is Murder, Sworn In, Architects

LISTEN TO:
Affinity

SINCE ITS VERY inception, deathcore has been a centre of discussion in the metal community. Though the genre produces planetary-core depths of lower-ended brutality, has the well run dry of creativity? Making a solid argument on deathcore's behalf are south London six-piece Vanity, who're showing what an infinitely imaginative powerhouse this genre of music still can be.

Previously known as Vanity Draws Blood, the band's 2016 sonic abattoir EP *Perspective//Dread* was an impressive accomplishment, even featuring Thy Art Is Murder's C J McMahon as a guest vocalist on the track *Anxiety*. However, it's their killer, soon-to-be released *Perspective//Empathy* EP that really has us drooling. Expansive and ambitious, Vanity are ushering deathcore into a whole new era.

"We'd been so used to writing a much darker style of music that getting out of that mindset was a challenge for us," guitarist Luke Jervis explains.

"AN ALBUM IS TOO LIMITED FOR US"

"*Perspective//Dread*, had more of a typical horror/deathcore vibe to it. With *Perspective//Empathy*, we've let loose a little bit more and it has a lot more to do with our own personal experiences in life. For our first attempt at writing something that was completely out of our comfort zone, I think we've nailed it and achieved what we wanted to do."

BARLEY REACHING THE 18-minute mark, *Perspective//Empathy* holds a tremendous amount of weight within that time, showcasing the band at their most vulnerable. The demons that accompany loss and grief stalk them closely, as they make themselves known on the single *Tranquil*, written for and dedicated in the memory of Elisha Alexander, sister of vocalist Kerrie.

"That was really difficult for us to deal with," recalls bassist Charlie Jones. "As our vocalists, I know Kerrie and Ryan [Stevens] write songs that try not to be too specific, so it can be relatable where possible. But equally, they stay true to what's happened in their lives, having to deal with what they've gone through."

"It's definitely made us grow stronger," Luke continues. "At the end of the day, we're not just bandmates – we're a family. We're all there for each other through all the sad times, but also the good times. The hardest part is playing these songs live. We all get quite choked up while we're actually playing. We've only played *Empathy* live in its entirety once, but the feeling and the reality of what it's all about is very hard-hitting for us. We feel powerful to actually go out there and be able to do that."

Being the second of four EPs planned for the *Perspective* saga, will this all culminate into a full-length album by the end of the process, we wonder?

"We're definitely considering it," says Charlie. "An LP is still something that we've had on our minds for a while, but there's options that we still need to discuss. At this stage, an album might be too limited for what we want to achieve. Doing these small chunks has allowed us to learn and progress ourselves as a band. We're actually really enjoying just doing what we want without any limitations." ✠

***PERSPECTIVE//EMPATHY* IS OUT SEPTEMBER 22**

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e·a·r MUSIC

Idles: the soundtrack to your next rally

IDLES

These Bristolian post-punks' lyrics cut bone-deep

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

SOUNDS LIKE:
A metal-tinged post-punk soundtrack to righteous moral outrage

FOR FANS OF:
The Jesus Lizard, Sleaford Mods, Helmet

LISTEN TO:
Mother

***'THE BEST WAY** to scare a Tory is to read and get rich'* – pulling no punches as to their political affiliations and as unapologetic as any band (punk, rock or metal) before them, Idles' arrival on the UK music scene is strong empirical evidence that extreme political landscapes produce great art. But where other bands merely paddle in the muddy waters of social thought, Idles submerge themselves entirely.

"The dish of the day is politics," says frontman Joe Talbot. "But you can't just say, 'We're a political band' – what do you believe in? Spell referendum!"

Possessed of a sardonic wit that evokes the punk spirit of '77 while welding it to a more modern, visceral tone, Idles take the venom of hardcore, the social injustice inspiration and post-punk intonation of Sleaford Mods, and add a crunching metallic twist to create something truly left-field.

But then, what else would you expect from a band that formed from the dying embers of the Bristol indie scene? Not because Idles felt a part of it, of course – quite the opposite. This is a group of people who never felt at home, er, at home, and they are now ably blazing their own trail. "The bands we were surrounded by didn't really represent us – they were a bunch of rich kids with nice guitars who weren't writing about anything to our interests," Joe notes. In what would become a staple approach, the band tackled the issue head-on. Their sound wasn't crafted overnight, however. "For a while we were writing what we thought we should write, rather than what we wanted to," he explains. "It evolved into something heavier later on and felt more cathartic, more us."

"When I discovered metal, I found my first real connection with music," adds rhythm guitarist Lee Kiernan. "People don't realise how much melody there is within metal. It's not all thrash. Personally, I'm a huge 80s fan. I love bands like Def Leppard… I even love Bon Jovi. The guy's a genius: a pop, rock, metal genius!"

"POLITICS IS THE DISH OF THE DAY"

LOVE FOR JON-BON or no, Idles' music is a world away from the 80s stadium-fillers. Yet, it still possesses enough fire to ignite audiences to such an extent that the band have enjoyed not only a mostly sold-out UK tour, but a string of appearances at most of the UK's biggest festivals. "It was an honour to play Download," Lee adds. "It's Glastonbury, but catered to a very different audience…"

With a visceral, appropriately angular debut album in *Brutalism* and a reputation for frenetic live performances ("I'd rather someone come away from our shows thinking 'That was fucking horrible' than say 'That was OK'," Joe says), Idles are the full, righteous package. But, furious though the band may be, they don't exclude *anyone* from enjoying their gigs.

"It's not OK to attack anyone, no matter what they believe in. Everyone should be able to express themselves freely. If Theresa May came to one of our shows, it would still be her safe space!"

It's a nice gesture, but we're not totally sure she'll be taking you up on that any time soon, fellas. ✠

***BRUTALISM* IS OUT NOW VIA BALLEY RECORDS**

Multinational marauders raging against humanity

IMPLORE

Implore are bringing the nations together through extreme metal

WORDS: DOM LAWSON

SOUNDS LIKE:
A snotty, incensed explosion of grinding, death metal violence

FOR FANS OF:
Napalm Death, Venom Prison, Nails

LISTEN TO:
Loathe

IF EXTREME METAL serves any purpose beyond making us deaf, it really should be to give voice to the fury of the disenfranchised and forgotten. Formed in Germany in 2012, Implore are a multinational three-piece with a sound that straddles modern death metal, old-school grind and flat-out hardcore punk. Their new album, *Subjugate*, really does sound like a Molotov cocktail going off between your ears.

"This new album is a critique of society and it's about how we became what we are," says band founder and singer/bassist Gabbo. "I studied the foundations of humanity from an anthropologist's and historian's viewpoint, to be able to analyse and understand why I hate it or disagree. The overall theme of the album is a trip, from the hunter-gatherer era to the technological, contemporary system we live in today, and the catastrophic threat that is waiting for us in the future."

HAVING GENERATED A moderate buzz with their vicious *Depopulation* debut in 2015, Implore are well placed to capitalise on their growing reputation. It certainly helps that *Subjugate* is a more distinctive and rounded work than its predecessor.

"Yeah, it's more complete than *Depopulation*," says the frontman. "The lineup has changed completely since the last album. The old guys couldn't keep up with the band touring schedule because they gave priority to their jobs, which is a normal thing to do! I'm the only original member of the band now but the chemistry between us today is great."

Renowned for their dogged dedication to jumping in a van and hitting the road for as long as possible, with extensive tours of Europe, the US and Mexico under their belts, Implore are already a well-travelled bunch. Gabbo originally hails from Argentina, while drummer Guido is Italian, guitarist Petro is Spanish and recent new recruit Markus is a native German. This may explain why, despite its familiar component parts, Implore's sound is so tricky to pin down, even if it does have certain logistical disadvantages for the band themselves.

"Communication can be tough sometimes," Gabbo admits. "Especially when we have five or six people in the van and two are native Spanish speakers, two are native Italian speakers and two are native German speakers! But there are many multi-national bands around today. There are no real pros or cons. We're all in the same boat, aiming for the same goal, regardless of language."

If you've been patiently waiting for some ferocious extreme metal that taps skilfully into the world's current state of anxiety while never forgetting to rip people's heads off, Implore are definitely for you. On the road across Europe with similarly crusty labelmates Vallenfyre during September, they may very well be unstoppable. In the end, the devil really is in the details.

"For this album we worked every idea through to the small details," Gabbo states. "We discussed *everything*, from song structure and arrangements through to the order of the tracklist and the connections between one song and another. We're very happy with the outcome." ✠

***SUBJUGATE* IS OUT NOW VIA CENTURY MEDIA**

"THERE'S A CATASTROPHIC THREAT WAITING FOR US"

JAY PERRY

Hundred Suns have a bright future ahead of them

HUNDRED SUNS

Norma Jean and ETID members make a fresh racket

WORDS: RICHARD HOBSON

SOUNDS LIKE:
Proggish tonal experimentation and choruses made for arenas

FOR FANS OF:
While She Sleeps, A Perfect Circle, Taproot

LISTEN TO:
Partner-Predator

THE TIMING COULDN'T be better for massive choruses in metal. Not only have the likes of Avenged Sevenfold and Five Finger Death Punch made the jump to some of our biggest venues, but some of metal's most prestigious names from across the years, from Korn to Disturbed to Deftones to Marilyn Manson, are finally returning to arenas after years toiling at academy level. Armed with an arsenal of massive choruses and even bigger riffs, Hundred Suns dream big with their debut album *The Prestaliis*. Featuring the talents of Cory Brandan (Norma Jean), Ryan Ledger (Every Time I Die) and Chris LeMasters (Dead & Divine), Hundred Suns are a band quite unlike any of their individual members' previous projects – but that doesn't mean they don't draw on their past experiences.

"It really helps us to keep onto the path of our singular vision," says vocalist Cory. "I don't know many bands that didn't start out as teenagers. They gain popularity and end up signing contracts or whatever and end up losing any joy or artistic vision. We don't have any of that baby shit – we've done this before and there's no way we can't use all the knowledge and experience we've got to make this band work."

This prior experience has certainly served to fully flesh out their sound – *The Prestaliis* is more akin to a seasoned band hitting their stride than a band taking their first steps into the world.

Funded via IndieGoGo (an impressive feat considering they only had one song to demonstrate their prowess), it's understandable that Hundred Suns feel a great debt to their fans.

"Right now, those fans are all we have," Cory admits. "We need to get out there because they made the record happen. Most people have to start from nothing, but we're all pretty stoked and lucky that we don't have to go from ground zero again."

Determined to do things right, the band have put great thought into every part of the album – right the way down to the artwork. "It comes down to artistic vision," Cory says. "We controlled everything for this, right down to the packaging. It has a collectible feel. It's exactly what we want to make, every label and band should be doing it."

ENORMOUS IN SOUND and confident in tone, Hundred Suns take the best parts of arena metal (crowd-baiting choruses, commanding riffs) and season it with prog-like experiments in tone that fully utilise each member's talents. A power trio, Hundred Suns enjoy a set-up older than metal itself.

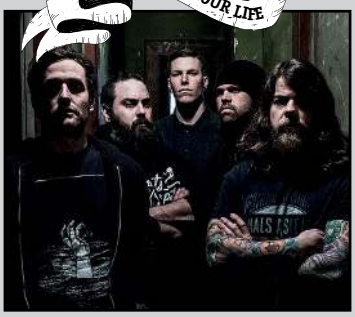
"I've never been in a band like this before," Cory states. "Bigger bands can fall into the habit of relying on the other guys, but we're tied in to each other and really dig the basics of guitar-drums-vocals." For three men, they make a hell of a noise. ✠

"THIS AIN'T BABY SHIT"

***THE PRESTALIIS* IS OUT NOW VIA NEW DAMAGE RECORDS**

NEW NOISE ROUND-UP

MORE YOUNG BLOOD YOU NEED IN YOUR LIFE



NECK OF THE WOODS

A prog-death maelstrom, Neck Of The Woods come lumbering out of Vancouver with brutal riffing that has earned comparisons to early Opeth and Between The Buried And Me. That's not company to be sniffing at.

LISTEN TO: *BOTTOM FEEDER*

HOLDING ABSENCE

This young, melodic post-hardcore crew from Cardiff mix walls of ambient noise with big hooks and meaty metallic riffs. They've recently shared the road with We Are The Ocean, Blood Youth and Loathe.

LISTEN TO: *PENANCE*

PEARS

Mixing spunky hardcore punk with big riffs and a fat dose of humour, NOLA scamps Pears have toured with Rise Against and NOFX. Just check out the *Green Star* video to see why they're making waves. Rock'n'lol...

LISTEN TO: *GREEN STAR*

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Lars: snarl & destroy

BACK TO THE FRONT

As Metallica prepare to bring *Hardwired...* to the UK, we headed to Canada for an exclusive, intimate look inside the biggest tour of 2017. Welcome to the greatest show on earth, *babeeeeeeh*

WORDS: CLAY MARSHALL • PICTURES: ROSS HALFIN

Lars Ulrich is chomping on a toothpick, sipping tea and wondering how his band have managed to remain so famous. We are sitting backstage at Toronto's Rogers Centre, where Metallica will later perform before *52,000* people on the 18th North American date of their ongoing WorldWired tour. They first played the city in 1985, at a club show alongside W.A.S.P. and Armored Saint, before this stadium even existed.

"As you get further into your run, you almost get high from the fact that it's still even fucking happening," he marvels. "I may not be as critical as I was 10 years ago, because a bigger part of my outlook on everything now is, 'Holy fuck – I'm 53 years old. People still give a shit!' That just blows my mind."

The drummer is in good spirits today, welcoming us into Metallica's "tuning room" – a makeshift rehearsal area decorated with fan-made flags where the group warm up for 30 minutes each night – and peppering his conversation with phrases like "blowing my mind" and "mind-fuck" that are characteristic of his speech. The last time *Metal Hammer* spoke to the band was in New York in September 2016, two months before the release of their 10th studio album, *Hardwired... To Self-Destruct*. At the time, fans had only heard the spunky title track and were nervous about what to expect from the rest of the band's new material.

Since then, the record has gone platinum in the US and double-platinum in Canada – they'll actually receive commemorative sales plaques from their Canadian distributor tonight – as the WorldWired tour has rolled through a handful of major cities in Asia, South America, Europe and now North America. In October, it will finally reach the UK.

It's clear Lars focuses less on the detail of Metallica's performances these days, and more on gratitude for their continued success. "When you start talking about the drum fill in song eight or something," he says, "does any of that really matter in relation to the fact that there's 52,000 people coming tonight, or my shoulder is still functioning, or we can all get dressed in the same room or share space?"

Hammer landed in Toronto just a few hours ago, but Metallica have been here for nearly a week. Long gone are the garage days when they'd get in the van or tour bus and drive from venue to venue together. Now in their 50s, they choose a series of "base camps" from which to operate – cities that act as temporary homes while they commute to and from shows in surrounding areas (prior to Toronto, they were based in New York City, Chicago and Miami).

This strategy keeps them from tiring too quickly, mentally and physically, of the lifestyle and of each other. The 2004 documentary *Some Kind Of Monster* showed a band with potentially volatile chemistry, and while they've moved on massively since then, Lars is candid about the need to still maintain boundaries.

"We're very conscious of not crossing a burnout line," says Lars. "We set it up so that we have the slightest to smallest chance of the whole thing derailing. We're aware of the abysses around us, >

Horror obsessive Kirk shreds on his *White Zombie* guitar

"HOLY FUCK, PEOPLE STILL GIVE A SHIT!"

LARS IS GRATEFUL PEOPLE CARE ABOUT METALLICA IN 2017

Rob catches up with Ray Burton, father of the legendary Cliff

Just another intimate Metallica show...

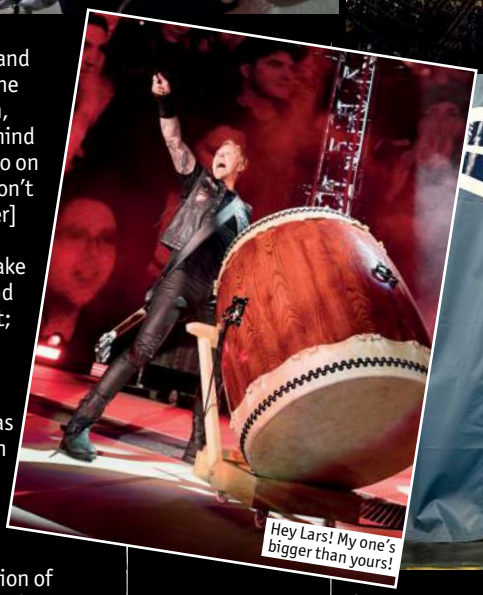
and if we can steer that train and keep it on the track – and at the same time hold onto the train, because the train also has a mind of its own – this thing could go on for 200-300 more years. We don't need to go to dinner [together] every night; we don't need to hang out; we don't need to wake up and text good morning, and go to sleep and say goodnight; but we need to get along and have a nice, civil time."

Before arriving at Rogers Centre this afternoon, Lars has been spending his free time in Toronto with his wife, model Jessica Miller, while guitarist Kirk Hammett has kept busy by scouring local shops in hopes of adding to his collection of vintage horror movie posters. There's currently an exhibition featuring 150 of what he calls his "best pieces" on display at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, where the infamous witch trials took place 325 years ago.

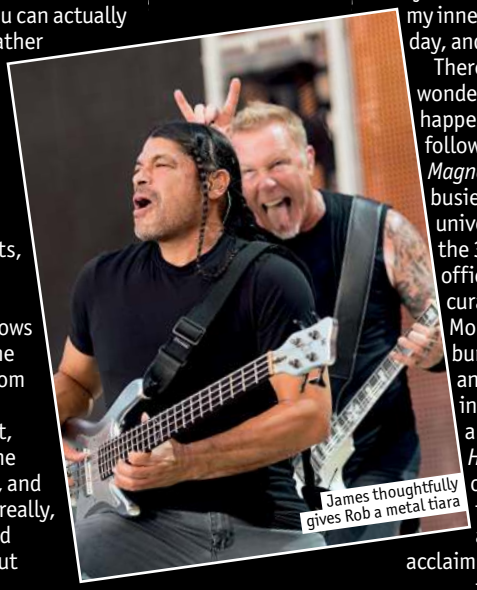
"When you 'base', you feel like you have some sort of foundation," Kirk says. "You know that when you set something down, you don't have to pack it up 10 hours later. It's great, because you can actually feel a little bit grounded, rather than wondering, 'What city am I in? What day is it? When you're moving around like that, it can be very disorientating."

These days, the group typically tour in leisurely paced, two-week increments, followed by two weeks off at home. They also limit themselves to around 50 shows a year. Still, Kirk says that he doesn't like to drift away from the stage for too long.

"To be completely honest, I'm a mental waste-case," he says. "I have mental issues, and anger is one of them. What really, really helps me is music, and playing music, and going out there onstage. What people don't understand is the anger, the angst, the anxiety, the frustration – all those various feelings and emotions that are attached to our music – are feelings that live in us, and have been there since the beginning. Just because you become famous or you have a little bit of disposable income, that's not a cure for my inner anger. I have to deal with my inner anger every single fucking day, and music helps that."


Hey Lars! My one's bigger than yours!

The Rogers Centre is home to the Major League Baseball team the Toronto Blue Jays


James thoughtfully gives Rob a metal tiara

"I HAVE ANGER ISSUES EVERY SINGLE FUCKING DAY"

KIRK HAS HAD TO USE MUSIC AS A WAY TO DEAL WITH HIS MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

There was a time when fans wondered whether this tour would happen at all. In the years following the release of *Death Magnetic* in 2008, Metallica busied themselves with the universally panned *Lulu*, released the 3D concert film (and box office bomb) *Through The Never*, curated the failed Orion Music + More festivals and played a bunch of one-off shows, with an occasional tour sprinkled in for good measure. It was a long, eight-year wait for *Hardwired...*, and the question on everyone's lips was: can they still cut it? Almost a year later, with critical acclaim and chart successes under their belt, Lars is proud of the album and feels it's ageing better than some of its siblings.

"When you make records, there's a point where you start asking questions – 'Why did we do that?' 'What were we thinking?' 'What frame of mind was I in?' Most of the time when you ask the 'Why?' question, it comes from a critical place," he says. "[With *Hardwired...*], there's none of those questions yet. I really have no issues or faults with it. I played along to a few songs in my home studio to warm up before we started on this leg, and I thought the record still sounded incredible, [even though] it's coming up on a year. That's a long time, and for some of our other records, there were a few of those 'Why?' questions that showed up earlier than a year."

Every night on this tour, the band play five new songs as part of a setlist that typically comprises 18 tracks performed with surgical precision – 19, if you include an instrumental jam between Kirk and bassist Robert Trujillo. Even better, the *Hardwired...* material sits comfortably alongside the classics.

"They fit right in," Kirk says. "The flow between the new songs and the older songs, which is usually a good barometer as to how well they're liked and how well they work live, is pretty seamless in terms of audience reaction. That's always a great thing, because that means they like what they're hearing."

"Do you want heavy?" a battle vest-clad James Hetfield asks a packed Rogers Centre four hours later. "Metallica gives you heavy, Toronto!"

Yet another explosive set for the metal titans

As the audience roar in approval, the group launches into *Sad But True* for what the song statistics page of the band's website says is the 1,218th time (it's the seventh most-performed song in the group's catalogue). Even though they could surely play the track in their sleep by now, it sounds absolutely colossal tonight – a sneering, primal war stomp that makes 52,000 heads bob reflexively.

It's far from the only highlight of the band's 140-minute performance. With the crowd warmed up by support acts Volbeat and Avenged Sevenfold, Metallica open with a one-two punch of new material via *Hardwired* and *Atlas, Rise!*. Just as Kirk says in the tuning room, the response to the new songs is overwhelmingly positive, but when the band subsequently turn back the clock with *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, the crowd go even more ballistic.

Up next is *Fuel*, which is punctuated by eight giant columns of flames that, according to a fact sheet supplied by the band's publicist, each emit 10 times more heat than the average home barbecue grill. Notably, it's the only song aired tonight from the often-controversial years between *The Black Album* and *Hardwired...*, which makes this truly an all-killer, no-filler performance that, thanks to five, 50-foot video screens sandwiched between giant inflatables of the M and A from the band's logo, feels larger than life.

"IT'S SOME PEOPLE'S FIRST METALLICA SHOW TONIGHT. THAT'S A MIND-FUCK!"

LARS CAN'T BELIEVE METALLICA ARE STILL BRINGING IN NEW FANS

After *The Unforgiven* provides a temporary breather, Metallica deliver another double-shot from *Hardwired...*: *Now That We're Dead*, which features a memorable Taiko drum circle jam and perhaps the band's best riff in a quarter-century, and *Moth Into Flame*, which sees the stage stalked by what might be best described as a fiery shark fin. Both prove to be genuine highlights – no small order when your competition includes capital-C classics such as *One* and *Wherever I May Roam*.

Following a blazing rendition of *Hit The Lights* – the first song the band ever wrote – James asks for a show of hands from "the first-timers in the Metallica family". After a good third of the audience raises their arms, he pauses for a moment to take in the sight. "It's pretty amazing that there's still some new people coming in to see Metallica, man," he says. "Young, old, medium... medium-aged? What is that?"

Backstage earlier in the day, Lars says he's stunned by the number of young people he's seen in the crowd on this tour. "A lot of people say that people love to come back to songs that have shaped their lives – 'I grew up listening to Metallica when I was 15, so they hold a dear place in my heart at 35 or 45 or 55,'" he says. "That's a fine theory, except the mind-fuck of mind-fucks is that half the people in the audience [on this tour] are 15, and it's their first Metallica show. That's the craziest thing – the turnover. There still feels like there's this organic thing happening."

Lars hasn't found fault with *Hardwired... To Self Destruct*

Later, Papa Het calls out a young fan who's sandwiched against the barricade. "How old are you – 13?", he asks. "And you're in the front row? Who are you with – your dad? You and your dad came to Metallica? That's fucking cool!" Lars then offers another young fan the ultimate heavy metal rite of passage by extending an invitation to come onstage, sit behind his kit and count off the intro to *Seek & Destroy*.

As they perform the song, the band admirably manage to make a stadium show feel intimate. "We're recreating the garage. That's exactly how it was in 1883 when we started!" James quips, as the band gather around

No monsters in sight: Metallica are happy in each other's company these days

Even Metallica get to fanboy out sometimes... it's Steve Harris!

Honestly, at this stage in their career, you'd think they could afford chairs by now...

a second drumkit that's magically risen from below the circular catwalk surrounding the 'Snake Pit', where 200-300 fans chosen by lottery (and for a few songs tonight, guitarist Rob Caggiano of openers Volbeat) stand shoulder-to-shoulder directly in front of centre stage. During the song, a ticket stub from the band's inaugural Toronto appearance is projected on the video screens – a nice personal touch for the hometown crowd.

After *Enter Sandman* – still as potent as ever – brings a three-song encore to a close, an impressive fireworks display ties a celebratory bow on an epic performance.

As the smoke clears, the band are whisked away by imposing, Secret Service-like sport utility vehicles. Soon after, despite Lars's earlier comment about the band not needing to dine together, they are driven to an afterparty at a local restaurant with their tour mates in Avenged Sevenfold and Volbeat (Gojira will replace Volbeat for the second half of the tour). It's a drastically different undercard from the band's last North American stadium tour 14 years ago, when they were supported by Limp Bizkit, Linkin Park and Mudvayne.

"We've played a lot of shows with Avenged over the years. We've played a lot of shows with Volbeat. These are people that we know very well; these are people that we've championed," says Lars. "Some bands [we've toured with] may not have been judged by history with the same kindness as others, but I can look you in the eye and go, 'There's nobody that's played a Metallica stage that we did not at that particular time endorse and support.' I think as we get older, though, we like to have bands with us that are part of the family."

Still, there remains a huge gulf between Metallica, the rest of their family and beyond. On a global level, only Iron Maiden, AC/DC and Guns N' Roses can consistently pack stadiums like tonight's, and of those, the future of AC/DC is uncertain, while the jury's still out on how long of a honeymoon the GN'R reunion will continue to enjoy. It's a topic that Metallica ended up discussing with Iron Maiden last night, when they were hanging out after Maiden's gig at a Toronto amphitheater.

"One thing that came up a couple of times is that there aren't many bands left," Lars says. "Black Sabbath have sort of politely, respectfully exited; you've got AC/DC; you've got Iron Maiden; you've got Judas Priest. We appreciate more than anybody will truly ever understand the position that we somehow inadvertently ended up in. We're proud; we're appreciative; we're humbled; and we'll be at the leading edge of the cavalry and charge forward with the best intent."

Kirk hopes that Metallica's tour mates can continue to grow and prosper, but worries about the state of the genre when the band finally fade to black.

"It's important for me that there are bands like that coming up, but I haven't seen the momentum," he says. "Is it the record company? Is it the fans? Is it the band? I don't know, but fuck, man – it seems like time's running out on us. I want someone to listen to. I want someone to rally for. I want someone to cheer on. Do it, man – upset the fuckin' masses. Piss people off. Make some great fuckin' entertainment, and make some exciting music so that I can tell my kids, 'See this band, boys? Aren't they fuckin' great? They're the band that dad thinks are the right band to take dad's band's place.'"

Until then, the Metallica train will continue moving full speed ahead. This October, they'll hit five arenas around the UK for their first proper tour here in eight years. Unlike tonight's mega-performance, it's going to be in the round, giving us the chance to get up close and personal with The Four Horsemen – somewhat like being in the tuning room, only with a bigger audience and a lot more pyro.

"The summer stadium tour is outdoor, and more like a heavy metal picnic, >

"THE UK SHOWS ARE GOING TO BE MUCH MORE INTIMATE"

KIRK'S LOOKING FORWARD TO GETTING UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH THEIR UK SET

SUM KIND OF MONSTER

The WorldWired tour in numbers

54,000
The number of guitar picks that the band will toss out during the WorldWired tour

0 The number we caught in Toronto

48 The number of trucks required to carry the stage set and equipment from city to city

83 The number of laser fixtures used in the tour's production

640
The number of hours that it took to program the lasers

0.01 The number of seconds it took for us to marvel at how cool they were

1 The number of slices of chocolate layer cake we scarfed down in catering when no one was looking

9,000,000
The total amount of lumens (a unit used to measure the intensity of light) that the tour's production utilises

1,600
The number of lumens in the average light bulb

5.45 The combined length, in miles, of cables that are used to connect and power the tour each night

1 Distance in miles from *Hammer*'s hotel room to the Rogers Centre

2 Members of Anvil we spotted backstage

3 The number of times James Hetfield says 'famileh' in his speeches before *For Whom The Bell Tolls* and *Sad But True*

James could barely contain his excitement after finding the cleverly camouflaged guitar

All that time hanging out with Maiden has had an effect on the guys...

whereas the arena tour is going to be much more intimate," explains Kirk. "When we're on a smaller stage, it's closer to real life and how we really play our instruments together in a room, so of course it's going to feel more comfortable. We're able to interact more with each other and the audience."

They'll continue to tour throughout 2018, hitting Scandinavia and western Europe in the first half of the year, and are already thinking about their plans beyond this cycle. Fans irritated with their recent diversions into films and other extracurricular activities will be heartened to hear that music remains their present focus.

"The one thing we've had a couple conversations about is the length of time between *Death Magnetic* and *Hardwired...*, which was eight years," Lars says. "We'd like to see if we can beat that. Obviously, that space had a lot to do with the Lou Reeds of the world, the 3D movies of the world, the Orion festivals of the world and all the other auxiliary projects – which we love doing, and which is a big part of us staying creatively fulfilled. But we've had a couple conversations about getting back to recording and being creative again sooner than later."

In a candid acknowledgment few superstar acts would make, Kirk says he understands why many fans were frustrated by those secondary projects, but he predicts that in time, they'll come back around.

"I think for as much as people have issues with us, after a while, they say, 'Alright, they're not perfect – they don't make all the best decisions at all the right times, but they're only human.' We're doing the best we can, and doing the things we feel are healthiest for our art, our music and our creativity," he says. "When we do something or exhibit behaviour that might be contrary to what people think we are, they get mad – but whether they're pissed at us for one day, one week, one month or one year, eventually they're going to be driving their car, and *Master Of Puppets* comes on, and they're like, 'Fuck yeah!'. That's what brings them back."

Having already played every continent, Kirk says he'd love to someday perform aboard the International Space Station. Lars, meanwhile, mentions wanting to play Coachella. In the meantime, they and their bandmates will enjoy the feeling of having the wind at their backs as they circle the world in support of their best-reviewed album in years – another jewel in the crown of metal's undisputed world champions.

"What's difficult sometimes to comprehend is why one record connects at one level and another record connects at a different level," says Lars. "Lots of critics are saying lots of nice things, but I've also been in Metallica where lots of people are not saying very nice things, so you try to not get too attached to either outcome.

"I think the main difference now is appreciating that we still have this ability to connect when we play music. It's that X factor – certain bands, put 'em in a room together and it still fires up. [For us], it still *absolutely* fires up. Hopefully it will keep doing that for some time, and hopefully when it doesn't, we'll be the first ones to acknowledge that it's not, and respectfully walk away."

Based on what we've seen tonight, their flame burns hotter than ever. ✠

"WE'RE GONNA RECORD AGAIN SOONER THAN LATER"

METALLICA WON'T BE TAKING ANOTHER EIGHT YEARS TO MAKE THEIR NEXT ALBUM

***HARDWIRED... TO SELF-DESTRUCT* IS OUT NOW VIA BLACKENED RECORDINGS. METALLICA TOUR THE UK IN OCTOBER – SEE P.111**

WIN MASTER OF PUPPETS DELUXE BOX SET

Get your hands on the Metallica motherlode

Metallica just don't do things by half, do they? Their immense, remastered version of *Master Of Puppets* will be landing on November 10 via Blackened Recordings in a variety of formats – and we've got the deluxe edition box set version to give away to one of you lucky motherfuckers.

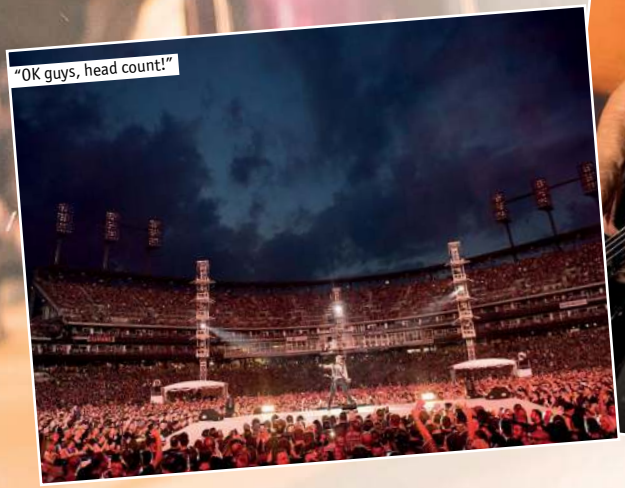
To stand a chance of winning the *Master Of Puppets* deluxe edition – which will feature *10 CDs*, two vinyl LPs, two DVDs and a cassette tape, along with a 108-page hardback book, lithograph, folder with handwritten lyrics and six button badges – just head to https://tinyurl.com/metallicawin and answer the below question:

Who originally produced *Master Of Puppets*?

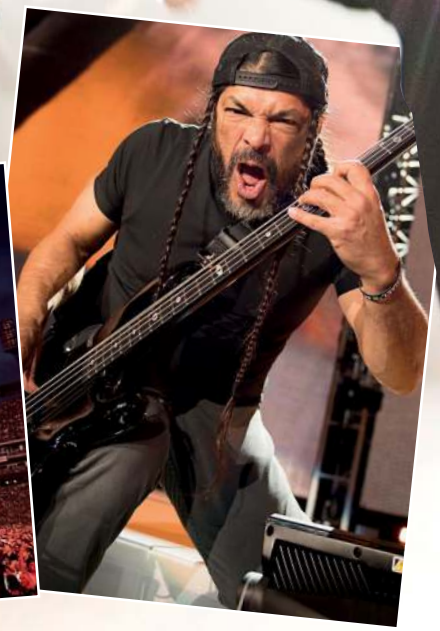
A) Bob Rock
B) Flemming Rasmussen
C) Paul Curcio

"WE STILL HAVE THAT X FACTOR"

LARS SAYS METALLICA WILL KEEP GOING FOR AS LONG AS THE CHEMISTRY REMAINS



"OK guys, head count!"



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THE EXTREME TAKEOVER

Napalm Death at Glasto. Venom Prison on the main stage. Kim Kardashian in Morbid Angel shirts?! The underground is becoming more visible than ever before. As it gains more recognition, rising from the dark void and into the mainstream, we decided to devote this special feature to all the incredible extreme music being made *right now*. The bands you'll read about are blazing a trail in their own way, all different in sound, but all with one aim: to take extreme music forward as loudly as possible.

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How Satyr faced down his biggest battle

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Their incredible rebirth and resurrection

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When death metal goes mainstream

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The next generation rises up

EXTREME TAKEOVER

In September 2015, Satyr suffered a seizure and woke up in an ambulance. The two years that followed would change his life forever. The Satyricon frontman tells us…

"I'VE HAD TO START ALL OVER AGAIN"

WORDS: JONATHAN SELZER

In September 2015, without warning, Satyr Wongraven had a seizure at home and passed out. When he came to, he was in an ambulance called by his partner, and his world was about to change in ways that he wasn't at first able to grasp.

"In the beginning, when I was at the hospital in the first few days, I don't think I fully realised what exactly was going on," he recalls. "I'm not a naive optimist; I'm a little bit more wary and sceptical, and I like to double-check things. The doctors just said, 'We're still trying to find out what's wrong with you, but we have discovered a cyst in your brain. It's not cancer or anything, it's benign, but it's something that we just need to monitor and take it from there'."

For an artist so fiercely driven, coming from within a black metal scene that's always celebrated the power of will and self-determination, Satyr had entered a new, uncertain realm he'd have to learn to navigate from the ground up.

"There was one part of me that thought, 'Oh well, that didn't sound too dramatic'. But on the other hand, I thought it couldn't be that great because I felt terrible, ha ha ha! So I was a little confused because someone was saying, 'Well, it sounds worse than it is and we'll keep track of it, and if this takes a turn for the worse then we'll have to do something more drastic'. But I was thinking, 'Why is my pulse 32? Why am I in such a terrible shape all over and why has my body shut down completely?'"

The specialist Satyr was referred to offered some perspective, explaining that the symptoms he was suffering were fairly common for the condition, but it was the beginning of a long and ongoing road back to full health that's called for various lifestyle adjustments, and it's given him new perspectives in the process.

"Physically it's kind of rough on me," he admits, "so I had to start all over again, and I honestly feel like I'm physically not back to where I used to be because my body seems to have a harder time in terms of pushing so relentlessly as I used to. But I still work out and I'm physically active, just maybe not as kamikaze-like as before. Likewise, I can party but I'm not so much of an afterparty guy anymore, ha ha ha! So for the most part you have to adjust, but we all go through so many different things in life, you have to learn to deal with it and the most important thing is to not give up on your art."

"I'M STILL NOT BACK TO WHERE I WAS"

SATYR'S BRAIN TUMOUR CHANGED HIS LIFE

Engaging, voluble, but a man whose steely perfectionism doesn't lie far below the surface, Satyr is wary of relating his latest album, *Deep Calleth Upon Deep*, too closely to his diagnosis. In no small part that's because the writing process had already begun a year earlier, but there's also the fact that the four years since Satyricon's last, self-titled album was released have offered a range of experiences that have granted him new ways of perceiving his music.

"I don't really think of myself as ill," he says, "because I live, basically, a normal life, but I think my perspective on a few things has become more interesting. Over the last few years, I've done, from a musical point of view, some very interesting projects. There was the live collaboration with the Royal Norwegian Opera Chorus at the Oslo Opera House in 2013 ,and the 20th anniversary shows for *Nemesis Divina*, which has put some nice perspective in the importance this band has had in a lot of people's lives. And yes, then you can add to that a real health scare, but also in the last five years, becoming the father of two boys!"

Satyr recalls how, when his second son was born during the recording process of *Deep Calleth Upon Deep*, he had to be moved to an intensive care unit due to water on his lungs. Satyr sat with him until the next day, until the nurses pushed him to go home. On an impulse, he decided to head for the rehearsal studio instead.

"I picked up the guitar and started playing a melody," he remembers, "and [long-term musical partner and drummer] Frost said, 'Wow I really like that. Maybe I can play some drums around it, too.' That ended up being the chorus of the title track. So there you go, who knows where *that* comes from? Maybe that's just being awake for 30 hours, being through some sort of emotional rollercoaster, being on a high on a lot of different >

Satyr and Frost: definitely, defiantly old-school

things and then something is building up in my subconscious as soon as I grab the guitar and start playing something. That just says something about how everything that we experience in our lives affects us, and as musicians we have our instruments as tools of expression."

Constant agitators against the conservatism of black metal, Satyricon have always refused to look back and go over old ground. Each successive album has claimed new musical and spiritual territory, and *Deep Calleth Upon Deep* is another, fearlessly bold step that's likely to surprise at much as it will galvanise its listeners.

Welded to its supremely efficient chassis you'll find unexpected progressive elements, subtle classical instrumentation, saxophone parts and, emerging from its meticulously calibrated momentum, a deeply affecting new range of emotion. Be it the searching, spindly riffs peeling off *To Your Brethren In The Dark*'s central core or *The Ghost Of Rome*'s expansive surges, guided by an operatic vocal swooping above, this feels, for all its resolute, modernist temperament, like Satyricon's most personal album to date. *Deep Calleth Upon Deep* may sound triumphant, but it refuses to take shortcuts, wrought instead from gristle and relentless, anvil-stamped determination.

"I like that idea of determination," says Satyr. "I never thought about it that way, but that really says a lot about the way we feel. If people can pick up on that, that's great. You can talk about this record and its spirituality and its darkness, but I think that what I'm hearing on this record, you say determination and I hear that, too, in all our records. But the passion is very important to me. What I hear when I listen to it, obviously I know that we feel it when we do. It has that rawness that perhaps you hear less and less of today, because in recording technology it has become important to many bands and producers for everything to sound perfect."

Tell Satyr that the album contains much that is unexpected, but feels like it's opened up new routes for the band to explore, and he'll tend to agree with you.

"It did end up somewhere different to what I thought it would, too," he admits. "In the beginning there was a lot of really aggressive stuff, and there's still a lot of really aggressive stuff, but partially because of my health scare I felt that this had to have a stronger spirituality. A lot of the time I would think, what if this is the last thing I do? And then other times I felt this is possibly the beginning of something new, so it has to be edgier than what we are doing right now. Songs couldn't just be 'good'; they had to feel *special*."

Sixteen years since they formed, Satyricon aren't just still going strong; their status as a relentlessly vital force, unencumbered by the drag of legacy that's weighed so heavily on their peers, has given them a rare freedom – not just to define black metal purely on their own terms, but to drive it ever forwards, beholden to nothing but their own will. It's an attitude that's brought in large numbers of fans beyond the black metal cliques, and Satyr thinks he knows why.

"It's because a lot of the same things that people outside of black metal dislike about black metal, I dislike too. I always found it to be so ironic that that group of people who would stand up for individualism at the same time want everything to be a collective. I feel that everyone is listening to the same bands, the same records and that's boring. Let's see if there's something else out there that's more interesting. I'm not a downstream guy – it's genuinely in my nature to go upstream."

Satyr at last year's Bloodstock: as relentless as ever

"MY HEALTH SCARE GAVE THIS ALBUM SPIRITUALITY"

SATYR'S EXPERIENCES AFFECTED THE WRITING PROCESS

Some have mistaken Satyr's certitude, and his willingness to call out the failings of the scene from which he sprung, as arrogance. But for him, it's a right that's had to be earned.

"I consider myself a black metal fan," he states. "I consider my band a black metal band. I feel like sometimes people forget when they ask me: 'The old-school people say…'. So you mean the *other* people, unlike the new-school people like me who just started doing this? I've been doing this my whole fucking life! I'm 41 and I started doing this when I was 15. I was 17 when I released my first black metal record. How much more old-school does it get? So when people say to me, 'You're breaking the rules', I say it's interesting that you'd say that, because I belong to a generation who made the rules, and one of the rules should be there are no rules."

Deep Calleth Upon Deep isn't a literal response to what Satyr has been through. It transmutes it into something more universal. It's a gift. What advice would Satyr give to fans who have their own mountains to climb?

He takes a deep breath. "Listen, I also have emotions. I also get sad and deeply upset or furious. But regardless of my emotions, what I first and foremost am driven by is: 'OK, so this seems to be the situation, what are we going to do?' And I think if you are able to do that, you can still be deeply sad and frustrated and upset and furious, all these things, but you will pull through it if you are prepared be a pragmatic taskmaster and become task-oriented. If you are overwhelmed with what has actually happened and you're incapable of doing something about it yourself, rely on others too. Don't be afraid to ask for help. It sounds simple and it is simple. That's just the way it is!" ✠

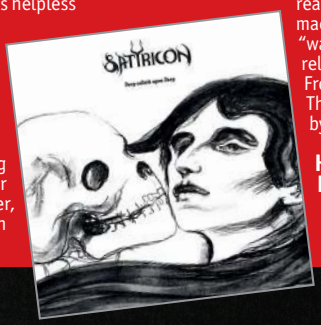
***DEEP CALLETH UPON DEEP* IS RELEASED ON SEPTEMBER 22 VIA NAPALM**

MORBID TALES

Everything you need to know about Norwegian artist Edvard Munch, whose dark drawing adorns the cover of *Deep Calleth Upon Deep*

MUNCH'S EXPERIENCE OF MORTALITY STARTED EARLY ON

Born in December 1863 in Løten, Norway, Edvard Munch was the second of five children. His father, Christian, was a doctor, but was helpless when Edvard's mother died of tuberculosis when the boy was only five years old, and his sister Johanne Sophie passed away at the age of 15 from the same disease. Johanne Sophie's death later inspired Munch's 1885 painting The Sick Child and many further works. Tragically, another sister, Laura Catherine, was sent to an asylum early in her life.



HIS MORBID TEMPERAMENT WAS HOME-SCHOOLED

Suffering from ill health as a child, Munch was schooled at home by his pious father. That didn't stop him from reading his son ghost stories, which inspired macabre nightmares. Edvard also said his father "was temperamentally nervous and obsessively religious – to the point of psychoneurosis. From him I inherited the seeds of madness. The angels of fear, sorrow and death stood by my side since the day I was born."

HE TOOK AN EARLY LEAP FROM NATURALISM TO NIHILISM

Having experimented with both the naturalist and impressionist styles of painting early in his career – to critical disapproval – Edvard became friends with an anarchist and a nihilist called Hans Jæger, whose celebration of artistic destruction and suicide pretty much make him an early version of Shining (Swe)'s Niklas Kvarforth. Immersed in the bohemian lifestyle, Munch sought out a more emotional, self-examining style of art.

JUST LIKE IN THE MOVIE, THERE'S MORE THAN ONE SCREAM

There are actually four versions of Munch's most famous painting and representation of the anxiety of modern man, The Scream. Two are painted, and permanently housed in the Oslo National Gallery; two are pastel versions, one of which was auctioned for a whopping $119,922,600 at Sotheby's in 2012. Two of these versions have been stolen and later recovered, one of them getting damaged in the process.

Hey, Dani! Would you play guitar for us?

EXTREME TAKEOVER

FROM THE CRADLE TO THE GRAVE

Cradle Of Filth have turned to Victorian literature and death customs on their latest album, making for a distinctly British and gothic reflection on mortality. Grab your crucifixes...

WORDS: CHRIS CHANTLER

Dani Filth is in a mischievous mood. The arch self-deprecation and decadent, piss-taking merriment that have propelled Cradle Of Filth for 25 years is in full effect as *Hammer* settles down in a pub garden with the brains behind this unique British institution, who quietly confesses to being a little worse for wear after his 44th birthday weekend bender.

"You'll have to excuse me, my family flew in from... wherever they live, Singapore or something," the singer deadpans. "I literally didn't think I'd be able to get up this morning," he adds, replicating the anguished sound he made when he opened his eyes on another heavy metal day. But as ever, the show must go on: especially when there's a brand new Cradle Of Filth album to get our teeth into...

The band's 12th record, *Cryptoriana – The Seductiveness Of Decay* revolves around the Victorian obsession with death. It's a classic motif, reconnecting the band with the 19th century English gothic aesthetic and rich Hammer Horror milieu that distinguished them from the blasphemous black metal herd circa 1994. But with recent albums focusing on ancient world mythologies and 15th-century witch burnings, the reassertion of this era wasn't a calculated move, instead springing fully formed out of Dani's obsessive passions.

"I was just struggling around for another idea, to be honest!" he begins, with relaxed candour. "When I got presented with the music, I thought it dictated a certain vibe – we always have a vibe around our albums. I was reading a lot of Victorian Gothic horror – E.F. Benson, Robert Louis Stevenson, Rider Haggard – and thinking, 'I have no idea what the next Cradle album's gonna be about'. And then: '...Oh, hang about!'"

Dani's immersion in these sinister adventures led him to contemplate why the Victorians were so obsessed with mortality and, in turn, why he's so obsessed with that sharply double-edged period of British life, when the aristocratic elite presided over a global Empire while leaving the poor on their doorstep to fester in squalid slums. It was an age of rampant spiritualism, penny dreadfuls, memento mori, post-mortem family photography and vast landscaped public cemeteries; an age titillated by morbid tales of Jack The Ripper, Burke and Hare, Dracula and Sweeney Todd, while the Queen herself remained in mourning for 40 years.

"The whole era seems drenched and entrenched in that gothic atmosphere," Dani gushes, warming to his theme. "Everybody daubed themselves in funereal garb. I'm a big fan of that whole era, it is pretty much my life. I live in a Victorian house full of weird stuff; I've got two mummies! I just had my loft converted, and found a weird *Edward Scissorhands* turret in the corner that we didn't know anything about." Was anything bricked up inside it? "There is now: empty guitar cases."

Cradle feel right at home let loose in this lurid psychogeography, the pungent atmosphere curling off the grooves in evocative lines from the title track, such as, *'London run amok is Sodom bathed in an eerie light and a sickening fog'* and *'The mist carousing off the Thames, its sallow tendrils bend the will of many men to morbid fascination'*. Once the penny (dreadful) dropped, you might imagine the lyrics came flooding out in an epic splurge to rival Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Dani shakes his head, staring forlornly into his pint.

"It's awful every time, literally awful," he intones. "What I'm planning to do – which I've been planning to do for 25 years – is to write a book, and then write lyrics about the book. But I'm shit, I can't do that. It's really hard, but I am trying. *Very* trying." He smirks. "I have got an idea for it, but every time we end up making an album instead!"

"IT'S LIKE BUILDING A LEGO DEATH STAR!"

DANI FILTH EXPLAINS HIS BAND'S WRITING PROCESS. SOUNDS EASY ENOUGH...

The new Optrex advertising campaign took a dark turn...

As ever, *Cryptoriana – The Seductiveness Of Decay* boasts a well-honed signature style that travels right back to Cradle's debut. Despite an ever-changing line-up, somehow their music always ends up feeling so intrinsically Filthy, even though Dani, the band's only constant, has seldom granted himself a musical credit across their discography.

"I play guitar but I'm shit," he says. "I'm the worst guitarist. Whoever you think is a worse guitarist, I'm shitter than them. So I can't imagine going, 'There you are, that's what I've come up with.' They'd be like, 'Really? Where's the second note?' It's not just that I tell them what to do – we get an idea and everything's built around it. It's quite easy, actually. Recently it's ended up with everybody bringing in two songs each, and we steer it from there. It's like building a Lego Death Star."

It says a great deal that the band's latest, six-piece line-up has remained stable for two albums in a row, a feat that has never happened before. Cradle's longest-serving drummer (11 years and counting), Martin 'Marthus' Škaroupka, is not just one of metal's pre-eminent percussionists, he also devises much of the crucial symphonic orchestration. Meanwhile, Cradle's best-yet twin-axe tag-team – Derbyshire guitar teacher Richard Shaw and Marek 'Ashok' Šmerda, formerly in Czech black metal pioneers Root – continue to drop jaws with their flamboyant interplay and incisive chemistry. Such is the musical bond forged by this chance partnership, Dani has witnessed the guitarists in a state of high emotional rapture: "I've seen them literally in tears," he reveals. "It's the weirdest thing."

Having set lyrics about historical death customs to this lush extreme score, it's tempting to wonder whether Dani's planning an elaborate, Victorian-style funeral to mark his own passing when the time comes. "No, no, it'll be very futuristic," the frontman insists. "There'll be an elite team of Stormtroopers leading my body to a Star Destroyer waiting outside the chapel!" ✠

***CRYPTORIANA – THE SEDUCTIVENESS OF DECAY* IS OUT SEPTEMBER 22 VIA NUCLEAR BLAST. SEE P.111 FOR UK TOUR DATES**

EXTREME TAKEOVER

WRITTEN IN THE RUNES

One of metal's most fearless modern bands have reinvented themselves yet again. We find out exactly what Enslaved saw in the runes to create masterful new album *E*

WORDS: TOM O'BOYLE

In April 2016, Enslaved were still on a high from celebrating their 25th anniversary. There was much to be proud of – in their earlier days they had helped to define Norwegian black metal, before gradually reinventing themselves as a unique progressive entity that broadened the horizons of extreme music. Continuing this process, guitarist Ivar Bjørnson booked a studio and began work on *Sacred Horse*, a song that would become the centrepiece of forthcoming album *E*.

But not everyone in the band was happy. Keyboard player and backing vocalist Herbrand Larsen suddenly announced his departure after 13 years, throwing them into crisis.

"I think Herbrand was expecting a move in a rock-oriented direction, because the band had been going more melodic," explains Ivar. "[Then] he realised that Enslaved at any time could implode in total musical craziness! He wasn't as motivated as the rest of us, which had the opposite effect – we became more enthusiastic. Around the 25th anniversary, there was a realisation for us that success would be to realise our artistic vision; if it ends up on this or that commercial level, it doesn't really matter."

There was no bad blood in their parting, but the strong friendship in the band – completed by lead vocalist/bassist Grutle Kjellson, guitarist Arve Isdal and drummer Cato Bekkevold – made Herbrand's decision all the more agonising. "It was very painful," Ivar confesses. "It's so much fun touring; I guess he made the decision way back, but the social aspect kept him there for a long while."

So began the hunt for a replacement, with studio time fast approaching. "Finding a guy who can tour 200 days a year, committing social and relationship suicide, playing 70s-style keyboard and organ *and* singing clean vocals…" Ivar sighs heavily before continuing. "To find that in three months, preferably in our hometown of Bergen, with only 350,000 people living there, seemed like a long shot. But good art depends on luck and craziness!"

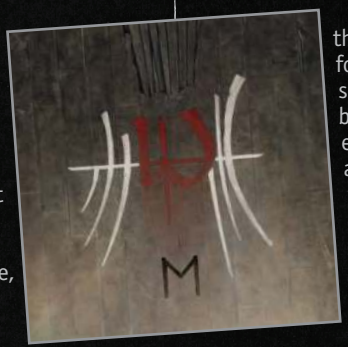
They didn't have to wait long, with Herbrand's farewell concert in Bergen surprisingly deciding their fate. A local prog band called Seven Impale supported, and their 25-year-old keyboardist, Håkon Vinje, immediately caught Ivar and Grutle's attention.

"We talked to him after the gig and he turns out to be a huge Enslaved fan, he also sings and, wouldn't you know it, his band are going on a break and he's looking for something new! We were like, 'Are you kidding?! It's been 16 minutes and we have a new guy!'" remembers Ivar. "Herbrand did his job but was great at playing many instruments; he didn't have that pride in being a keyboard player."

Despite their comfortable line-up, Herbrand's reluctance to experiment had begun to stifle the band's creativity, Ivar working on the keys and Grutle the vocals, without much contribution from Herbrand until the closing stages of a record. It was a declining situation they were determined to change. They were looking for their own keyboard maestro.

> "IT WAS PAINFUL TO KILL OFF PART OF OUR LINE-UP"
>
> WITH KEYBOARDIST HERBRAND LEAVING, ENSLAVED HAD TO GET NEW BLOOD INTO THE BAND

"He's three months younger than the band!" Ivar laughs. "The craziest thing is, he told us that when he was eight, he was watching Deep Purple on TV and exclaimed he wanted to be Jon Lord when he grew up! That was all the information we needed."



Håkon fitted seamlessly into the writing process for *E*, his love for Enslaved giving him a good sense of what worked for the band, while his talent surprised even Ivar. They soon developed a bond, Håkon affectionately referring to Ivar as 'Big Egg', and Ivar calling him 'Tiny Egg'.

"As painful as it was killing off the thought of our eternal line-up, there was something new born, and that was us going back into the studio as a unit and working on the vocals. It was challenging to have someone come in and see our processes, that young cheekiness that only 25-year-olds who really know how to play can have," Ivar grins. "His stuff was amazing – nothing had to be fixed."

Enslaved's Viking sword has been smeared with young blood; a crimson-spattered blade that has pierced the spiritual heart of the band, rejuvenating their quest. *E*, their 14th album, sees them inhabiting a mythic space, fuelled by the grating pace and iconic rhythmic staccato of their black metal origins while continuing their melodic evolution, enhanced greatly by Håkon's standout performance on keyboards. Tracks are significantly longer and more adventurously experimental than previous album *In Times*, with a theme as ever inspired by ancient Norse spiritualism, alchemically melded with Ivar's fascination with science and philosophy.

"That first song, *Sacred Horse*, became a question of synchronicity – that wonderful mechanism where your subconscious focuses in on things, and you start to see them everywhere," he says. "Some believe it's magic, the gods, whatever."

Ivar began to notice horses wherever he looked, turning to one of the band's pillars of strength, Norse mythology, for answers. Studying the runes, he found something to fuel his imagination: on their 14th album cycle, he was drawn to the 14th rune, 'the Ehwaz', which literally means horse. It exists to celebrate man's scared relationship with the animals, but represents something deeper.

"[Taming horses] turned Bronze Age man on to his awareness of holy partnerships," he says. "Man and horse is a very basic one, but it must've seemed to them like a miracle – suddenly you can move at speed, outrun your enemies, chase down deer; no wonder they gave it a rune."

Ivar began to apply the concept of sacred partnerships to Enslaved, inspired by the partial fracturing and healing of their own.

"Each rune represents a mystery," he continues, "and this one about partnerships, >

Enslaved (left to right): Håkon Vinje, Arve Isdal, Grutle Kjellson, Cato Bekkevold, Ivar Bjørnson

Things are definitely looking up for Enslaved

dualities and interdependence fitted well into the Enslaved world."

It's quite the thematic departure for a band traditionally focused on individuality – a recurrent theme in black metal – but no man is an island, and with instability threatening Enslaved, Ivar became fascinated with exploring human codependence. "A group needs strong individuals, but they don't work in a vacuum – even a misanthrope depends on the people he feeds on hating," he explains. "It's an admission that the story of the individual is important, but part of a larger narrative."

It's a recognition on Ivar's behalf that he hasn't always been the easiest to work with in Enslaved, citing his ambient solo project BardSpec, and his recent collaboration with Wardruna's Einar Selvik on their rousing *Skuggsjá* album, as two confidence-building corners of "a self-reinforcing triangle", the third being Enslaved.

"We both come from bands where we have the final say, and were forced to work together – the guys in Enslaved could tell you our collaboration has softened me up a bit," he admits.

This isn't Enslaved's first departure from traditional black metal ideology, and won't be their last. They're used to being outsiders, and you get the impression they thrive on gleefully challenging the expectations of fans old and new. Supporting Opeth – themselves an extreme band that crossed over into the prog sphere – on their forthcoming UK tour in November will further push Enslaved onto audiences who might be unprepared for the extremity of the assault that awaits them.

"We've enjoyed provoking purists in our own scene – it'll be fun to see how people in the so-called prog scene react," says Ivar. "Some say this isn't prog because of Grutle's extreme vocals – that's approximately the most ridiculous thing you can say. That is the definition of progressive – taking something you didn't expect and making something new. If we can stamp around in their fragile prog salad, that'd be awesome," he enthuses.

"WE'RE GOING TO STAMP AROUND IN THEIR FRAGILE PROG SALAD!"

ENSLAVED ARE UP FOR THE CHALLENGE OF SUPPORTING OPETH IN THE UK

However successful Enslaved become, their legend is secure, 'success' something they're unconcerned with, accusations of selling out null and void given the elongated, labyrinthine nature of *E*'s six tracks.

"Streaming services are openly telling record companies that artists should have four-minute songs. Enslaved with four-minute songs wouldn't be Enslaved; I stopped looking at the watch when making these songs," says Ivar.

So Enslaved emerge rejuvenated from turmoil, wielding one of their best albums to date, an adventure full of spine-tingling moments to rouse the old gods. It's the fruit of a refreshed creative process as intuitive in 2017 as it was in 1991, honouring their heritage but ever seeking to invade new shores, Ivar brimming with anticipation at the thought of unleashing their galloping beast on unsuspecting ears when the Opeth tour starts, regardless of the outcome.

"Now we have this opportunity, a steady increase in audience, so let's just see if it all crashes and burns," says Ivar with abandon. "We need to make sure we're on our toes!" ✠

_E_ IS OUT OCTOBER 13 VIA NUCLEAR BLAST. ENSLAVED TOUR WITH OPETH IN NOVEMBER – SEE P.111 FOR DETAILS

ALONE IN THE DARK

How Enslaved's Cato Bekkevold became the real wild man of rock...

Drummer Cato Bekkevold appears on reality survival TV show *Alene* (' Alone'), currently airing Norway. Ten contestants were cast out to survive alone in the wild north, with only basic equipment and a camera, to see how long they could last. He explains how he got on...

HOW MUCH DID YOU KNOW ABOUT SURVIVAL BEFORE THE SHOW?
"I know quite a lot about nature, because I spend so much time out in it! If there's the possibility to do some fishing, that's what I do apart from playing drums."

WHAT DID YOU HAVE GOING IN?
"We got one pair of boots, a couple of pairs of socks, some pants, a jacket, a warm hat and some gloves. And a rucksack to carry it in, and a light mattress. No tent, just a tarp for shelter. And a knife, an axe, a kettle, a cup and basic fishing gear – just a line and some hooks and sinkers. And a box of worms!"

WHAT WAS THE HARDEST BIT?
"Eventually it became a bit boring, because there was no one else to talk to. You've probably seen *Castaway* with Tom Hanks, when he ended up alone on an island. He paints a volleyball with his own blood and calls it Wilson – the camera was like my Wilson! But I found some garbage in a lake that I made use of. They told me, 'If you can find stuff lying around, you can make your own drumkit and film that' – so I did!"

HOW LONG DID YOU LAST?
"I can't tell you. But there were gigs coming up, so I knew that at some point I would have to throw in the towel. I had the best beer, shower and sleep I ever had after I left! My motivation to was to prove I was able to survive outdoors, at the mercy of nature, and I'm proud to say that I did."

See Cato's improvised drumkit at facebook.com/catobekkevold

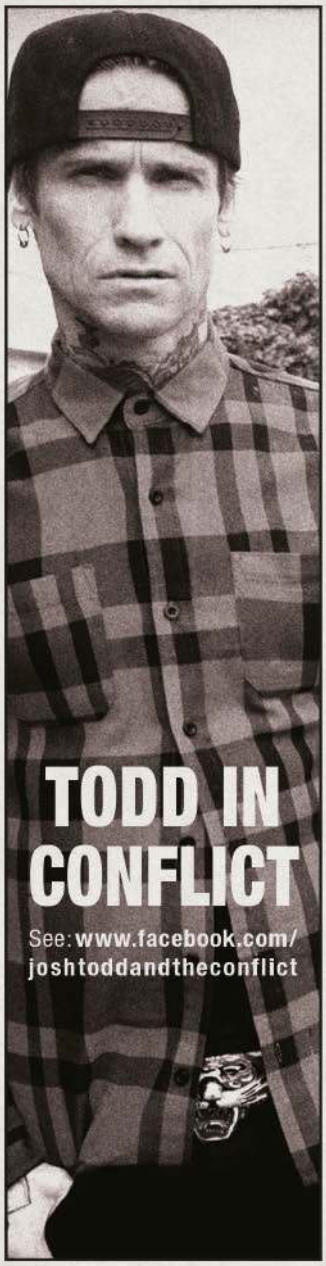
JOSH TODD & THE CONFLICT

Friday, 15th September 2017 FOR A GREATER RECORD COLLECTION @JTCONFLICT

NEW ALBUM HITS UK STREETS

By Josh Todd, & the Conflict

Buckcherry one of hard rock's finest bands will give way for a while to an amazing, dynamic new project Josh Todd and the Conflict. The band is set to release their raucous debut album on September 15th, 2017. **Full Story on 'YEAR OF THE TIGER'**



TODD IN CONFLICT

See: **www.facebook.com/joshtoddandtheconflict**

JOSH TODD & THE CONFLICT

YEAR OF THE TIGER

INCLUDES THE SINGLES: **'YEAR OF THE TIGER', 'FUCKED UP',** & **'RAIN'**

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BUCKCHERRY TAKE TIME OUT

YEAR OF THE TIGER

Josh Todd has a lot of storytelling inside and he always did want to start another band. Something more reckless and off the beaten rock path. A lot of changes had taken place in Buckcherry and he didn't want to go another year without making new music. BC is still in a great place but with the record dropping on September 15th, full attention now turns to **JOSH TODD & THE CONFLICT.** Full story on **'YEAR OF THE TIGER'**

JT: "All the problems get washed away when you join the Conflict!"

FULL STORY: TRACKS 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 & 11

EXTREME TAKEOVER

NOCTURNAL FEAR

Amalie Bruun had lost interest in making music… until the bad dreams began. Second Myrkur album *Mareridt* is a document of her terrifying visions, and it's set to transcend the underground

WORDS: DOM LAWSON

"I was in this building, like a warehouse, and some people were after me. I was with a group of people that I know in real life. My mother was there, too, but then she suddenly had a scorpion hanging from her upper lip. Someone in the group punches her in the face to make the scorpion fall off, but it falls into my leather boot and I can't get it out. It's stinging me really bad and I'm screaming, 'Help me get this out!' but they're all laughing at me…"

Two years ago, Amalie Bruun started to have nightmares. Not just the weird and occasionally unsettling dreams that have long haunted her slumbers, but the kind of harrowing unconscious hallucinations that caused her to scream herself awake. The dream she's recounting to *Metal Hammer* today, she explains, isn't even one of the bad ones. It's just a recent dream for which she hasn't yet reached a satisfactory explanation. In fact, Amalie has recovered from that prolonged spate of disturbed sleep but, in the form of her increasingly revered alter-ego Myrkur, the Danish musician is about to release an album that promises to drag us all into her dark, subconscious depths.

"I definitely think that your subconscious is processing everything that goes on in your life, but I do believe that it's deeper than that," Amalie explains. "I believe in a collective subconscious. I think there is an energy and a universe that, if you can tap into it… well, I don't know if you believe in psychics or people having visions, but I think that dreams have that element in there too, that for some people they become an almost spiritual and magical thing."

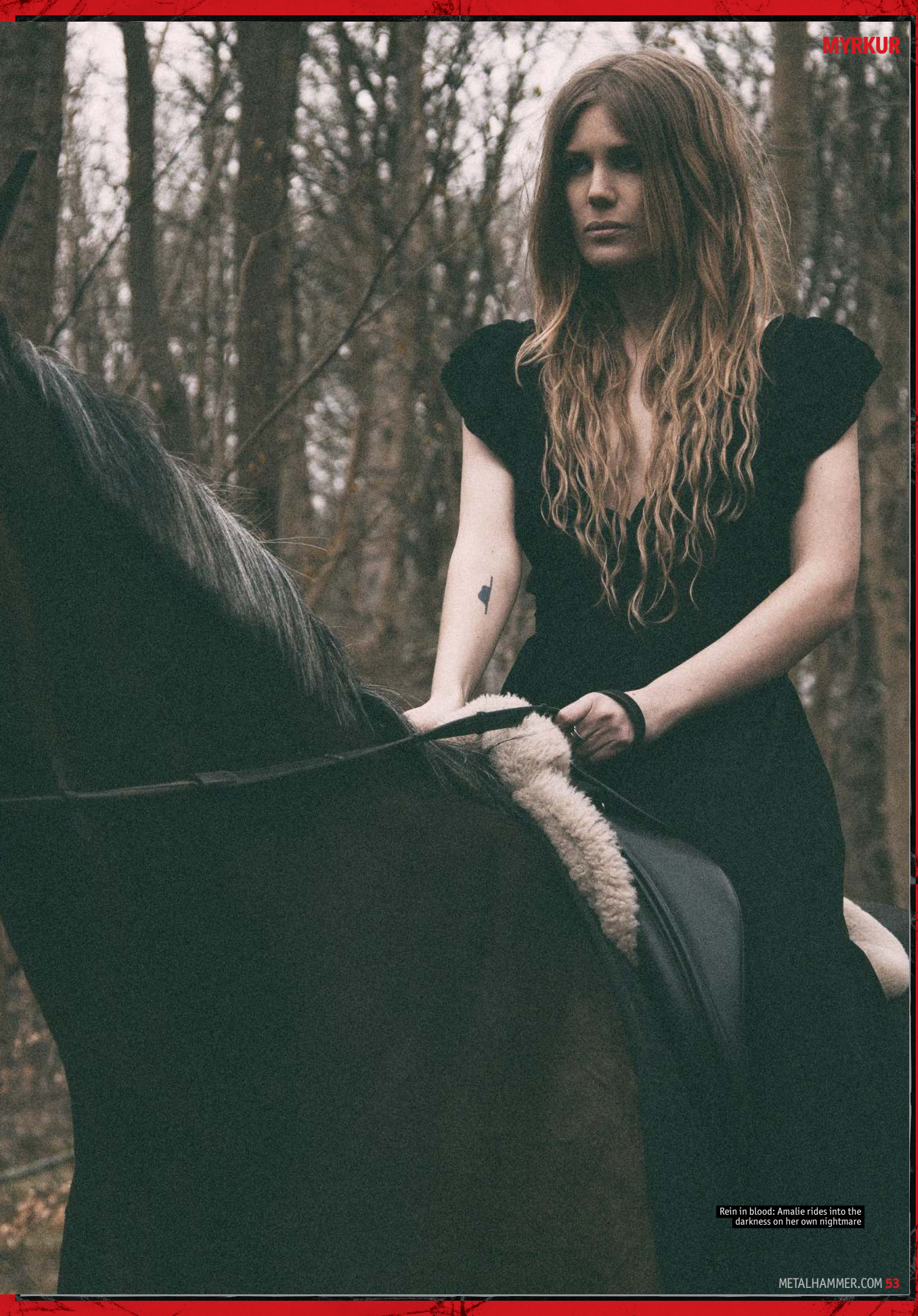
Myrkur's rise to prominence in an often snooty underground metal scene has been one of the more intriguing and satisfying things to watch in recent times, not least because Amalie is plainly a unique and subtly contrary antidote to just about everything else that's happening in heavy music. From the intimate ferocity of her eponymous debut EP to the more expansive, but no less intimate, full-length album *M* in 2015, her musical evolution has already been fascinating enough to turn an otherwise under-the-radar enterprise into one of the coolest names to drop in metal circles. On a superficial level, all of this newfound attention and promised success should have enabled Amalie to forge ahead happily. Instead, as she recuperated after a long period of touring in support of *M*, the nightmares began…

"After the debut album, we toured a lot, and everything became about creating a live show, which I really didn't want in the beginning. I didn't want Myrkur to be a live project at all," she states. "But we did it and that took so much energy from me, and other people, to make that happen. I was so sick and tired after it. I hadn't even picked up an instrument voluntarily for months, let alone written a song. I was completely uninterested in it. I think that's pretty classic, maybe? I wasn't feeling great either, on a personal level, but then I had all these nightmares for about two years. I've had nightmares and bad sleep my whole life, but this was *really* bad."

"MAKING THE RECORD WAS LIKE AN EXORCISM"

WHEN AMALIE FACED HER DEMONS, THE NIGHTMARES STOPPED

Amalie goes on to explain that the bad dreams were absolutely remorseless and intense for ➤



Rein in blood: Amalie rides into the darkness on her own nightmare

many months, disrupting her sleep every single night and making life extremely difficult for her then boyfriend, who was routinely woken by the sound of Amalie's screaming.

"It was horrible," she remembers. "So I went into Jungian therapy and then, when I began to write down the nightmares, it started to become an album."

It seems safe to say that no one reading this will hear a more idiosyncratic metal record in 2017 than Myrkur's second album, *Mareridt* (which, as you might expect, means 'nightmares'). A further step into brave, wildly imaginative territory, it showcases the blossoming of an extraordinary and highly individual talent. With moments of vicious aggression punctuating eerie, lysergic soundscapes and gently perverse folk instrumentation, it's as surreal and disarming as you might expect a gleeful plunge into a sensitive artist's troubled psyche to be. Sung primarily in Amalie's native Danish, English and Norwegian, it's an album that uses her voice as a guide through psychological landscapes and amorphous, whispered horrors, with everything rendered in vivid shades of monochrome by producer and collaborator Randall Dunn (Wolves In The Throne Room, Sunn O))), Earth).

"I wanted to take the best parts of the debut album and make them better, make them more concise and punchier," Amalie explains. "It had to be a punch, not a stroke! It just happened to work out this way, particularly as I was working within this universe of dreams... I wanted it to feel like a nightmare, so it's all very disorientating, levitating and floating, those feelings when you don't know what's round the corner, who's chasing you and when can you wake up? Randall totally understood where I was coming from. I knew he was the right guy for the job."

The other major collaboration on *Mareridt* arrives on the song *Funeral*, a duet between Amalie and one of her most obvious peers, Chelsea Wolfe. Although understandably reluctant to portray the team-up as anything more than a shared experience with a good friend, it does seem like a match made in heaven, as two of modern heavy music's most distinctive female voices collide.

"I do think the song is a good representation of her universe and my universe, and maybe another whole *other* thing, too," says Amalie. "Besides the fact that her and I have become friends, I just wanted us to make music together, like back in the day when PJ Harvey and Björk did it. A lot of people may consider Chelsea and I to be rivals, but this was a great opportunity to work together and have fun. Actually, I *really* want to do a video for the song, but I don't know if we'll be able to do it... it would be like a dark, metal version of Abba!"

"WE'D BE LIKE A DARK VERSION OF ABBA!"

AMALIE WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A MUSIC VIDEO WITH GUEST STAR CHELSEA WOLFE

Amalie chuckles quietly to herself, amused by the thought of the inevitable backlash from the black metal scene if she dared to make a video with even the merest hint of cheesy Scando-pop camp to it. But then it's obvious that this articulate and thoughtful 32-year-old has more than enough awareness, and self-awareness, to negotiate the potentially upward road ahead. A decade ago, Amalie was forging a very different career under her own name in more mainstream, indie-pop waters, releasing a self-titled album in 2006 and mingling in circles that could hardly be more different from the humbly grubby metal underground. But if cynics are wondering why she abandoned a pop career to transform into Myrkur, there is a clear and unequivocal answer.

"I just don't take part in the music industry, to be honest. I saw what I needed to see and I said, 'No thanks', you know?" she says with a shrug. "I didn't create Myrkur to become some puppet and nobody can tell me what Myrkur is. It's so funny, I have all these people online that are always hating on me and saying I don't know what black metal is and blah, blah, blah... I always say, because people ask me how I deal with it, that people in the metal scene sometimes think they're *really* dark, but if you want *real* darkness, go to the pop industry!"

With that in mind, is there a level of success you can imagine that would set alarm bells ringing and have you running for the hills? Is fame something you'd relish, or something that would ruin everything you've built so far?

"I think the industry people let me live in the belief that this isn't really a career – it's just the woods and me!" she beams. "I prefer it that way. If I can smell a music industry vibe, I want to puke. So I do think it's going to be a problem for me in the long run, but there's got to be a way to be able to make music and not be constantly run down and unable to be in your natural element. I don't have any ambitions about being some sort of Lady Gaga-level artist. So it's got to be possible to be within metal, folk or shoegaze, whatever it is that I do, and not be totally unhappy, right?"

Perfectly placed to disprove the tired notion that extreme music can't possibly reach a wide and varied audience, Amalie has just completed work on one of 2017's most important and distinctive albums. Not just a graceful stride towards bigger and better things, it's a fervently personal and yet effortlessly mysterious journey through one woman's unknowable subconscious. And yes, the nightmares that plagued Amalie and provided so much disquieting inspiration have finally receded, leaving their ostensible creator with plenty of questions, a degree of closure and a strong sense that confronting the dark is good for the soul.

"I wasn't in any way counting on it being any kind of therapeutic experience," she says. "It's more like an exorcism, like, 'Here you go, I don't want them any more, *you* can have them!' But I do feel a little better. I sleep better now, so it really has helped me. I can recommend creating something from your dreams." ✠

***MARERIDT* IS OUT NOW VIA RELAPSE**

ALL NIGHTMARE LONG

Psychoanalyst Warren Colman explains what Jungian dream therapy's all about

So, what did Carl Jung think about dreams?
"He thought they were a kind of message from the unconscious part of the self. So if you can learn to understand the symbolic language, they can help you to grow, by integrating the aspects of yourself you might not know about. It's about facing your demons."

What does Jungian therapy involve?
"It could vary between just talking about your dreams to getting an interpretation of them. A lot of Jungian analysts might use a process that Jung called active imagination, where you might write it down, or draw, paint or sculpt – some kind of art embodying the dream. And also this process of having a dialogue with inner figures. A common idea is that if you're being chased by a monster figure in your dreams, if you can find a way of turning and facing it, getting to know more about it, actually getting into a dialogue about it, you're more likely to find out what it's saying to you. Things are frightening when they seem meaningless. Once you begin to get some sense of the meaning, they become less frightening. And of course having a therapist there who's a consistent figure helps a lot and also takes some of the fear out if it."

What do you think Amalie's scorpion dream could represent?
"It sounds like this is some aspect of her mother, but it's also got something to do with *her*. It's something that's maybe poisoning her relationship with her mother, so I'd want to think about what might be scorpion-like in the relationship. Another way might just be to focus on the image, so other analysts might say, 'Find out everything you can about scorpions, and allow that image to develop and see where it takes you.' It's interesting that the scorpion transfers from the mother to her – it's something you can't fight directly, you can't just punch it in the face, something more complicated is needed."
Find out more at www.thesap.org

As Myrkur, Amalie will haunt your dreams

WITTR (left to right): Nathan Weaver, Aaron Weaver, Kody Keyworth

EXTREME TAKEOVER

BITING BACK

Making music rooted in the very Earth itself, Wolves In The Throne Room influenced a whole generation of extreme bands - and they're back to reclaim their crown

WORDS: TOM O'BOYLE

A lot's happened Stateside in the three years since Wolves In The Throne Room last released an album. Trump's election has shifted politics to the right, and his party have brought in a generally regressive agenda, with climate change denial proving particularly painful for this band. Their elemental black metal gains so much power from their deep connection to the majestic forests enshrouding their hometown of Olympia, Washington, known to its inhabitants as Cascadia.

"It's agonising; I cry about it all the time," says drummer Aaron Weaver, the sincere spokesman for the band he formed with his younger brother, guitarist/vocalist Nathan, in 2003. Yet despite these environmental concerns, he makes it clear that discussing politics isn't on the agenda.

"I don't wanna talk about that shit," he asserts. "Our music is mythic; it's not operating in this world. For me it's personal, it's a feeling of grieving and sadness, and that feeling turns into music. The Earth will abide, no matter what happens to human beings."

Lamentation is but one part of the force and magic of forthcoming sixth album *Thrice Woven*, a collection of songs born of feral urge and spiritual instinct, rooted as much in their homeland as in the ancient European folklore that so inspires them – a key part of the escapism so vital to black metal's ability to transport listeners away from normality. It's all articulated with the gnashing of teeth that made an indelible impact upon the release of their 2006 debut, *Diadem Of 12 Stars*.

"Black metal needs teeth; this is the sound of a wolf tearing the throat out of its prey," affirms Aaron, proud that his band is regarded as spearheading American black metal, their aggressive sound and enlightened perspective paving the way for the likes of Deafheaven, building on foundations laid by the emotive extremities of countrymen Neurosis (legendary guitarist/vocalist Steve von Till even lends his weathered wisdom to a spoken-word piece on *The Old Ones Are With Us*). Their Norwegian black metal forbears also played a massive part, WITTR embracing the distinctive sound of the black flame while leaving some of the distasteful elements by the wayside.

"When I was a left-wing crusty back in the day and I heard [solo project of notoriously right-wing black metal progenitor/murderer Varg Vikernes] Burzum, it seemed like a story – that was the part that touched me, this mythic quality, the part that comes from the realm of dreams. That's the magic of art – a disgusting person can make art that touches you. Fuck Varg and his preposterous political agenda. It's so far from where we are spiritually and ethically."

WITTR took these mythic inspirations and built upon black metal's romanticism of nature's wilds, forging a unique voice. "It felt like music we'd never heard," reflects Aaron. "Of course there were bands that influenced us directly in terms of taking black metal into a new context, but that was about it – we just did our own thing."

Don't be misled into seeing the band as loners wandering the wilderness, however. A sense of community is important to them, tied into their love of their environment and a yearning to feel connected to ancient tradition. The band have embraced a DIY ethic from day one. They run their own label, Artemisia, and 2014's *Celestite* was the first album they recorded in full at their own studio they built within their 'compound' – the beating heart of the band.

"It's an amazing place," enthuses Aaron, his words alight whenever talk turns to home. "He lives right upon the edge of 500 acres of huge cedar and fir trees. The forest was cut down 110 years ago and has grown back wild. The ravens, deer and salmon are returning. When the touring band is here, we all live and cook together. We have salmon roasts, drink mead and work out the material. We have amazing neighbours with cool kids that come by sometimes."

To hear him speak of it is inspiring, conveying a sense of togetherness that is sometimes lost amid today's accelerated lifestyle. "That's the thing that I want most in my life – that sense of a village," Aaron says earnestly. "I realised as I got older and became a parent that that's all humans need – connection."

Aaron's son will soon be four, and fatherhood has had an indelible impact on his music. "It opened my heart wider," he explains. "If anything, being a parent lets me get into more terrifying places creatively."

Darkness is an omnipresent force in black metal; an ancient power source writhing within us all, that allows those unafraid to explore and wield it as effectively as WITTR to connect to something nameless – something deeper lurking within its sanctuary. "It literally comes from the body," muses Aaron, "from a deep, dark place that you can't attach a name to. It comes from the formless void; it gets you into that space. For me, it's a healing space; a nourishing space."

It's a way for them to tap into elemental forces of nature, *Thrice Woven*'s reverent savagery an attempt to blend their Cascadian worship with a love of ancient tales, creating new mythology for future generations. "Those are the stories we love, the stories I tell my son," says Aaron. "The stories about Cú Chulainn, the hero of Ireland, or about the Norse gods. I make up stories about salmon and cedar trees, the unique magic of this place."

Despite Aaron's reluctance to discuss the pressing issues of the day, they fester in his mind. As empowering as black metal is, it's a thought space to which we can only escape momentarily. Until death takes us, he reckons we must all ask ourselves what we can do to make this realm a better place, to instil community, to respect others and the world around us. With WITTR, he's trying to answer those questions himself.

"This is a complicated thing – what's my good work in the world?" Aaron asks himself. "Music – that's how I respond to things. I feel so blessed and privileged; I have so much gratitude for our fans. I always tell younger people: find out what your work is – what's the good work that you can do in this lifetime?" ✠

"FUCK VARG AND HIS AGENDA"

WITTR'S PLACE IN THE SCENE IS A WORLD AWAY FROM THE BURZUM MAN'S BULLSHIT

***THRICE WOVEN* IS OUT ON SEPTEMBER 22 VIA ARTEMISIA**

EXTREME TAKEOVER

RESURRECTION THROUGH CARNAGE

Following the split of arch Satanists Akercocke, frontman Jason Mendonca suffered from depression. Their first album in a decade, *Renaissance In Extremis*, is the sound of his rebirth

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY

Jason Mendonca can't say exactly when the light went out in his head. He remembers what he calls "the decline" kicking in during the latter days of his band Akercocke's original incarnation in 2010 or 2011. But the real crunch came a couple of years later, after everything had fizzled out on the musical front.

"I reached a point where I couldn't function as a person," he says. "I couldn't speak, I couldn't communicate, I couldn't go out. Quite simply, I had a total mental breakdown."

He relates this without drama, self-pity or the pain of recollection. For Jason, it's important that his story is out there in the world at a time when mental illness – particularly in the form of depression – is still a painfully raw topic.

Akercocke's new album, *Renaissance In Extremis*, is their first in 10 years, and the first since Jason emerged from the bleakest period of his life. It's both a journey into a heart of darkness and irrefutable proof that it is possible to come out the other side whole and well.

The Jason Mendonca sitting in this swanky but quiet London pub on a Monday lunchtime is a world away from the Jason Mendonca of 15 years ago. That man was a Satanic dandy with a pressed suit and an arched eyebrow. This one is no less funny and articulate, but infinitely wiser and more open, too. On record and in the flesh, the occult shtick has been sidelined in favour of a raw honesty that addresses everything he's been through in the last few years.

"Mental illness isn't a sign of weakness," he says. "If you fall off your bicycle and break your elbow, you go to the doctor's and get patched up. It's the same thing with depression. You can't see it, but it's no less valid than any physical ailment. And the more people talk about it openly, hopefully the more it will change people's attitudes to it."

In the desolate wasteland that was the British extreme metal scene of the late 90s and early 00s, Akercocke were a shining beacon. Their music oscillated between the violent and the complex; their lyrical concerns were rooted in the occult, the erotic and the philosophic. They were Satanists masquerading as a death metal band – or maybe it was the other way around – with Jason and drummer/partner-in-crime David Gray a Beelzebubian *Mighty Boosh*.

But by 2007's *Antichrist*, the flame was starting to flicker. Jason had become disenfranchised with the band he co-founded. This was partly musical. "We were starting to repeat ourselves," he says. "There were elements of that album that were very much straightforward death metal, and let's be honest, there's people who do it way better than we ever would, so what's the fucking point?"

But there were personal issues in play, too. Jason's workload within Akercocke and outside of it was huge. As well as rehearsing four times a week and managing the band, he was working 60 hours a week as a network consultant and being a father on top of that.

"I just didn't feel like I was participating fully because my head was elsewhere," he says. "I was keeping a multitude of plates spinning, and if you keep adding to them, sooner or later something's going to crash to the ground. And crash to the ground it did."

> "MENTAL ILLNESS ISN'T A SIGN OF WEAKNESS"
>
> JASON HOPES MORE PEOPLE WILL TALK OPENLY ABOUT THEIR STRUGGLES

It wasn't instant. The band continued for a few years after *Antichrist*, but Jason was feeling increasingly unwell. He had suffered from mood swings for years – "crippling anxiety that prevents you from opening your own front door, yet the next day you're the life and soul of the party" is how he puts it – but his state of mind was getting worse.

By the time Akercocke had played their last gig, in 2011, he was already starting retreat into himself. As he sings on *Disappear*, the opening track on *Renaissance In Extremis*: *'I simply cease to exist / I simply disappear.'*

"I became more and more hermit-like," he says. "I didn't really see anyone. I saw my family, but I didn't leave the house or socialise with anyone."

He found himself unable to function. He would uncontrollably burst into tears in front of the television. "Even if it was a cat food commercial," he says, with the sort of wry amusement that only the distance of time allows.

He threw himself into his job – it was easier than facing up to what he needed to face up to. Everything else fell by the wayside. It made a bad situation worse.

"I just wanted to die, there's no two ways about it. I wanted to kill myself, absolutely," he says. "I felt so valueless as a person that I didn't want to participate anymore; I just wanted to switch myself off. I felt it'd be easier for me to do that."

There were times when he had "entertained" (his words) getting help, but never seen it through. Now, though, things had reached rock bottom. The tipping point came when his mum turned up on his doorstep. She knew her son was in trouble and had looked into getting him help.

"She said, 'I've found some people I think you ought to talk to, and I think it's your last chance.' And I took that very, very seriously," he says.

Jason was diagnosed with depression. "I had always been of that really ignorant mindset that depression was something for people who ought to go out and get a bit of fresh air, pull their fucking socks up and crack on," he says.

This was different: it was happening to him. He gave himself over to recovery. This would involve Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and, later, anti-depressant medication. It would be a long slog – the best part of two years – before he was better. But the important thing was that he had stepped onto the path in the first place.

Jason can remember when the light came back on. In the past, he'd been the sort of person who heard music in his head – new riffs or melodies fighting to get out, to be hastily scribbled down and turned into fully fledged songs. All that stopped when he became ill and even when he began his recovery.

"During that period there was nothing," he says. "It was like someone turned off a tap in my head. That was very frightening."

He recalls the precise moment, not least because of its almost laughable banality. He had just turned off the end of the M4 and was ➤

TINA KORHONEN

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Akercocke (left to right): Sam Loynes, David Gray, Jason Mendonca, Nathanael Underwood, Paul Scanlan

braking at the end of the slip road when he suddenly heard a surge of music in his head.

"I thought, 'Ooh, that'll work quite well.' And then it occurred to me: 'You haven't had that kind of fucking thought for ages, dude. Just maybe it's coming back.'"

Just as music had re-entered his life, so Jason was ready to re-enter music. He hadn't picked up a guitar during the period of his illness, but his interest was reignited when he was asked to play in a metal covers band at a charity gig. David Gray had gently tried to steer him towards an Akercocke reunion in the past, but he had always refused, resistant to repeating the past. After that gig, everything had changed.

"I hadn't played the guitar for years, but at that gig I was thinking, 'Christ, I'd forgotten how important this is to me,'" he says. "That flipped a switch. I thought, 'If we reinvented it in the right kind of way, maybe we could do this again. It escalated very quickly."

The resurrected Akercocke played their very first comeback gig in front of several thousand people at 2016's Bloodstock Festival. "I walked out there and thought, 'Holy fuck'," he says. "It would have been nice to do a little club show to warm up and remember what it's like to do a gig." Chants of 'Welcome back' erupted between the songs. "I can't actually verbalise what I was feeling at the time, but it was wonderful."

The decision to make a new album was an obvious one. The only stipulation was that it continued the band's initial MO of moving forward with every release. "Especially the lyrical content," says Jason, who shared the lyric-writing duties with David. "It was important to me that we pushed that forward and not write about tits and devils anymore."

"WE DIDN'T WANT TO WRITE ABOUT TITS"

AKERCOCKE HAVE DITCHED THE THEATRICAL LYRICS FOR SOMETHING MORE PERSONAL

The new album certainly dispenses with the showboating Satanism and exultant erotica of the past. *Renaissance In Extremis* delves deep into the personal in the way that extreme metal rarely does. Tellingly, it's not just a litany of personal hells – there are glimmers of optimism in there, too. For every lyric such as, *'Place my hands gently over your ears / To save you the sound of my scream'* (*First To Leave The Funeral*), there's a line that runs: *'Don't give up the fight / From darkness comes light.'* Musically, too, it reflects myriad moods, from the old-school death metal of opening track *Disappear* to the forlornly jazzy ending of *A Cold Day In September*. This is extreme metal filtered through a fractured mind.

That's not the only thing to have changed. Most obvious is the fact that the band have dispensed with the suits that gave them such a striking image first time around. "Oh, come on," Jason laughs. "It wouldn't have been right. It would be like being in some shit am-dram group. What's funny is in those old interviews we say, 'We'll never be a jeans-and-t-shirt band.' You know what? I'm loving being in a jeans-and-t-shirt band."

But the biggest difference of all according to Jason Mendonca is Jason Mendonca himself.

"I learnt a lot about what to do and what not to do," he says. "Like not taking so much on. I wouldn't be so arrogant to suggest that it may not happen, but I would like to think that what I learnt would allow me to mitigate it before it escalated too far, and I know that I would reach out for help if it did. Because the worst thing you can do is bury something like this." ✠

***RENAISSANCE IN EXTREMIS* IS OUT NOW VIA PEACEVILLE**

SONS OF SATAN

Here's what the other members of Akercocke have been up to

Dāmim

Long before he signed up for the reactivated Akercocke, bassist Nathanael Underwood fronted London death metallers Dām (now Dāmim). Their progessive dynamics only enflame their extremity. They once featured famed producer Jaime Gomez Arellano (Ghost, Paradise Lost, Sólstafir) on drums.
Recommended album: *The Difference Engine* (2007)

Voices

Post-Akercocke, David Gray, Sam Loynes and latter-day bassist Peter Benjamin shook off their old band's rigid discipline and let the chaos wash over them on this black/death metal hybrid. Their sound is restless, relentless, pitch black and, on second album *London*, oddly cinematic. They've since recorded a new album but release details are yet to be confirmed.
Recommended album: *London* (2014)

The Antichrist Imperium

While Jason battled his demons, David Gray and guitarist Matt Wilcock took some of their former band's unfinished songs and retooled them for their new project. The shared DNA was obvious: intricate musicality, unexpected sonic left turns and contrasting growled/sung vocals picked up where Akercocke left off.
Recommended album: *The Antichrist Imperium* (2015)

Shrines

Returning Akercocke keyboard player and Voices guitarist/second vocalist Sam Loynes turned his hand to epic, progressive soundscapes. Nodding more to the elemental trawl of Neurosis and the off-kilter dynamics of Voivod than any of his former bands, their music wasn't, as Jason Mendonca might say, just about "tits and Satan".
Recommended album: *Shrines* (2015)

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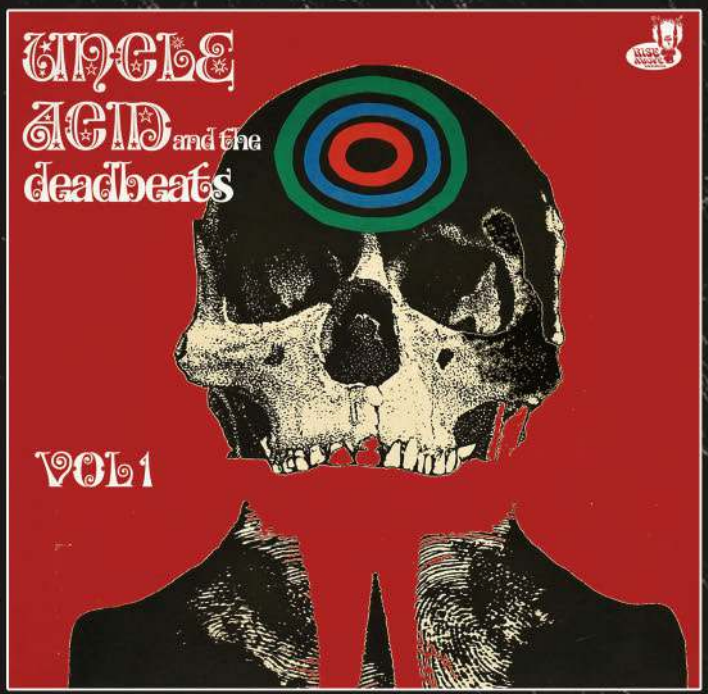

Uncle Acid & the Deadbeats - Vol 1
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www.riseaboverecords.com

EXTREME TAKEOVER

UNBORN SUPREMACY

Their name's offensive and they play brutal music, yet somehow Maryland's Dying Fetus are managing to infiltrate the mainstream. We interrogated them about their plans...

WORDS: DOM LAWSON

Whenever I hang with people from normal walks of life, if they bring up what I do, it's always an interesting conversation. They're like, 'Sorry, *what* was the name of the band?' Ha ha ha!"

Being a professional musician is indubitably at the pretty fucking cool end of the employment spectrum. As a member of Dying Fetus for the last 16 years, co-vocalist, bassist and lyricist Sean Beasley has managed to forge an enduring career in heavy music. Alongside his bandmates, co-vocalist/guitarist and founder member John Gallagher, and drummer Trey Williams, he has travelled the world and performed in front of all manner of disparate audiences. In 2013, thanks to a naïve but endearing comment about their suitability for topping the bill at Download festival made online by one loyal British fan, the Maryland trio enjoyed a brief moment of ephemeral fame in the UK, as 'Why not Dying Fetus?' got fully memed and Andy Copping did the decent thing and booked the band for an opening Main Stage slot on that hallowed Donington turf. But instead of disappearing back into the underground shadows when mainstream pundits turned their attention to the next trundling bandwagon, Dying Fetus took that momentum and ran with it. As we speak to Sean and John, they are in the midst of a European tour as main support to Hatebreed: something that most insanely brutal death metal bands could never dream of doing, let alone doing with great success.

"This is actually our third tour with Hatebreed, the first one in Europe, so there's camaraderie there," John drawls, blearily and pre-morning coffee. "Their crew's looking out for us, we get better catering, and we're playing in better venues than most death metal bands. So right now we're living large and I can't say this tour is hard work. But you still have to *want* to do it, I guess. Jamey [Jasta, Hatebreed frontman] has been a fan of the band for a while and he supports death metal. But I wish there were more bands outside of death metal that we could tour with. I must admit, it's a challenge. As soon as we start doing our vocals and the blastbeats, it does get a bit extreme for a normal rock'n'roll listener, ha ha ha!"

It's hard not to snort derisively when arena-level bands start pissing and whining about the rigours of life on the road. For Dying Fetus, 26 years after forming in John Gallagher's native Maryland, constant touring and a laudable dedication to reaching as many people as possible has become the *only* way for a band this extreme to survive. Grabbing opportunities like a tour with Hatebreed represents the glossier end of what this three-man wrecking crew have to contend with, and yet neither John nor Sean have any complaints. In keeping with the death metal scene's tradition of hard work and humility, this is simply what being in a band is all about.

"Huge bands play three days a week and they have time to rest," shrugs Sean. "Whereas we play *every* day, more or less. A day off means we're losing money. So you have to take good care of yourself or you can't keep doing this. If you get trashed every night, it's hard to get up every day and have wobbly knees onstage. But it's a general thing for most bands to consider, whether they can live out of a bag or not. It's all good if you can handle that. But for the three of us it's been eight years, and it's been very good. It's all been easy, from locking in together to play the songs, to getting along when we're on the road. Everything clicked and it's stayed that way. Hopefully it continues."

As they start to nudge, somewhat audaciously, at the metal mainstream, Dying Fetus could hardly be in a better collective frame of mind. It's obvious that Sean, John and Trey are a finely honed and harmonious unit – not least from the absolutely deranged levels of precise, deathly violence that they exhibit on their first album in five years. Charmingly titled *Wrong One To Fuck With*, the follow-up to 2012's *Reign Supreme* is, alarmingly, the most righteously eviscerating record the band have ever made. Their trademarks are all present and correct – vicious blastbeats, guttural vocals and, most importantly, those mosh-friendly 'chug parts' – but while most bands aiming for a higher rung on the metal ladder would consider mellowing out or writing a catchy chorus or two, Dying Fetus have done the exact opposite, making this their nastiest and most unrelenting collection of pit-inciting anti-anthems yet. For Sean, who writes all the band's lyrics, the new album is both a multifaceted response to how undeniably fucked-up the planet is right now *and* a good opportunity to delve into the more twisted side of the band's conceptual world.

"I guess it's more on the brutal side this time, lyrically, but there's still some politics on there," he nods. "We have the song *Wrong One To Fuck With* and also *Die With Integrity*, and those have this super-dark mob-style vibe to them. But the rest of the songs are about different shit. There's a song called *Fallacy*, which is about Hollywood pop culture, and how anyone super-famous can get away with anything, as long as they go through the steps and apologise publicly. I was thinking of [famous NFL quarterback] Michael Vick in

> "WE'RE PLAYING BETTER VENUES THAN MOST DEATH METAL BANDS"
>
> DYING FETUS ARE TOURING WITH HATEBREED FOR THE THIRD TIME

Dying Fetus (left to right): Sean Beasley, John Gallagher, Trey Williams

Dying Fetus: no rest for the wicked

football. He was involved in dog-fighting, he gets busted and then goes to jail for a year and half, and *then* he says he's found God. He comes out and he's a fuckin' *hero*, you know? It's a fucking joke. If he was a regular person, he would still be in jail."

One of the drawbacks of being an underground band with a mildly offensive name is that the potential to cross over to a bigger audience is minimal at best. But something significant has happened in metal over the last 15 years: whether you call them deathcore, modern death metal or some other vaguely accurate epithet, many of the most exciting bands to emerge have made no bones about their debt to Dying Fetus. Along with fellow purveyors of 'slam' (essentially brutal death metal with groovy breakdowns designed for the moshpit) such as Internal Bleeding, John Gallagher's crew kickstarted an entirely new mode of death metal expression back in the 90s, and the ripples from that blast are still being felt today.

"I think what we basically did was to have elements of Suffocation and a lot of the slam stuff that was going on, but we also took some influence from Carcass," John recalls. "Those guys were singing with two vocals and that brought another element into it, so we just embellished what was going on, putting our twist on everything. I never went at it thinking, 'I'm gonna do something completely different!' We've toured with Despised Icon and Carnifex, and they credit us as some kind of influence. I just think it's really important to have the next generation, the *new* generation, being down with your stuff. That's the only way you're gonna remain relevant, so we are thankful for that."

"WITH OUR NAME, GETTING BIGGER ISN'T EASY!"

CAN THE MAINSTREAM ACCEPT A BAND CALLED DYING FETUS?

They've conquered Download, toured with Hatebreed and discovered that there are a lot of people around the world that really, really like death metal. But Dying Fetus are not daft: they know there's a limit to the success a band can have playing this music, but they carry on regardless because they fucking love it.

"Getting bigger isn't easy for us, not with our name!" Sean chuckles. "But it's like the new album title. Is it offensive? Who cares? We do what we do. There'll be no more beating around the bush! We're optimistic about the future, but also realistic. We're still playing death metal and we love it, so we'll keep doing it. Optimism only goes so far, ha ha!"

The fact is, they've survived for a quarter of a century doing things their own way, and as the world seems to become more brutal and extreme, it's not hard to imagine Dying Fetus's music resonating with more and more people as time goes on.

"We're just doing what we want to do and touring where we want to, taking things as they come," John concludes. "That's how it started at the beginning. We had our day jobs and we'd have fun with the band, playing the stuff that we wanted to hear. We're doing much more and much bigger things these days, but the spirit is the same as ever. We just want everything to be *brutal*." ✠

***WRONG ONE TO FUCK WITH* IS OUT NOW VIA RELAPSE. DYING FETUS TOUR THE UK FROM NOVEMBER 3. SEE P.111 FOR DETAILS**

REIGN SUPREME

Never really listened to Dying Fetus, despite their veteran status? Here's your ultimate guide...

THE ANTHEM

In The Trenches (Reign Supreme, 2012)
An irresistible slab of hardcore-tinged brutality, it sounds like Hatebreed possessed by Satan and plugged into the National Grid. If this doesn't make you bang your head, you don't have a head.

THE ALBUM

Destroy The Opposition (Relapse, 2000)
Hugely influential and groundbreaking, the third Dying Fetus album emerged at the dawn of the 21st century and gave death metal a massive kick up the arse. Pit-inciting grooves, excoriating blastbeats, monstrous breakdowns... oof!

THE VIDEO

Panic Amongst The Herd (2017)
Against the odds, cult video maker Mount Emult's eye-frazzling animated collage makes this highlight from the band's new *Wrong One To Fuck With* album even more intense and bewildering. Extreme tune, extreme visuals, total brain-fuck.

THE SHIRT

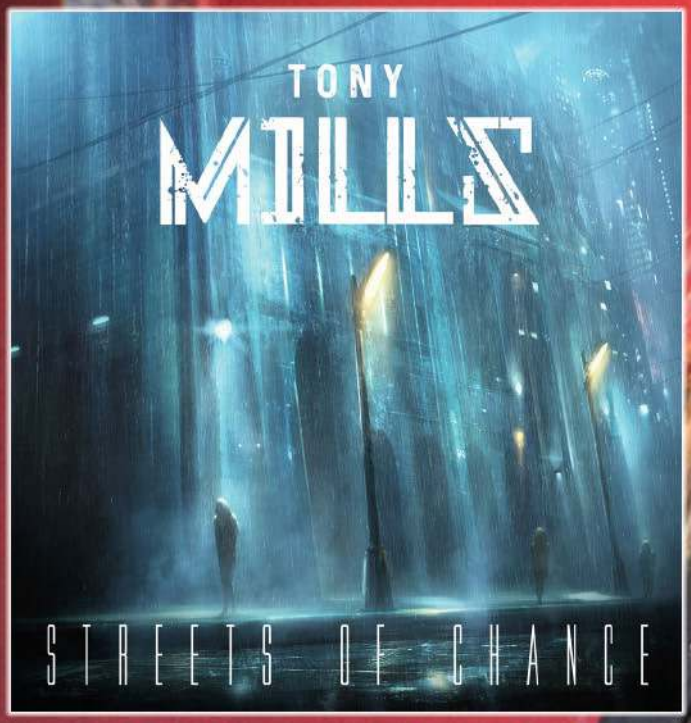
Curb Stomp
Death metal was never supposed to be cuddly. Inspired by vicious fan favourite *Subjected To A Beating*, this shirt echoes *that* scene in *American History X* and is guaranteed to upset your grandma. Job done.

THE HASHTAG

#whynotdyingfetus (2013)
The #whynotdyingfetus campaign began as a piss-take but people power ensured that the band opened the main stage at Donington in 2014. Win.

BATTLEGOD PRODUCTIONS PROUDLY PRESENT

TONY MILLS



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EXTREME TAKEOVER

The underground is more alive than ever, with countless amazing young bands pushing the boundaries of heavy music. We've gathered the very best around right now that you need to know about. Welcome to…

THE NEW AGE OF EXTREME

WORDS: DAYAL PATTERSON & DOM LAWSON

LORD OF WAR

Future brutality, California-style

Where many of their post-deathcore peers have a great sound but no songs, Lord Of War have the razor-sharp tunes to match their blistering chops. Last year's *Suffer* album was criminally overlooked and is simply the finest example of ultra-modern death metal to emerge in years. Future gods.

Listen to: *Manufactured Existence* (*Suffer*, 2016)

www.facebook.com/lordofwarmetal

WIDOWMAKER

Alabama brutes with a deathly core

Flying the flag for the thrilling midpoint between brutal DM and state-of-the-art deathcore, Widowmaker's face-flaying ferocity and crushing breakdowns will send fans of Thy Art Is Murder into a state of frothing rapture. Check out their self-titled debut EP for some top-notch thuggery.

Listen to: *The Nihilist* (*Widowmaker*, 2017)

www.facebook.com/widowmakeral

Widowmaker: get your affairs in order before listening to this brutality

TROJAN

Prog death devastation from Indonesia

One of the most exciting bands in the ridiculously populous Indonesian metal scene, Trojan's grisly but precise sound is equal parts slamming death metal and synapse-popping Meshuggah-style polyrhythms. Laudably progressive by design, recent album *Archaic Dimension* is an absolute monster.

Listen to: *Re-Fallen Race* (*Archaic Dimension*, 2017)

www.myspace.com/trojanmetal

VACIVUS

Murky UK death with a heart of horror

Death metal seldom gets more twisted than Vacivus's squall. Their new album could propel this Sunderland quintet to the upper reaches of the UK extreme underground. Their muscular but gnarly attack will leave you breathless. Or dead.

Listen to: *Towards Infinite Chasms* (*Temple Of The Abyss*, 2017)

www.facebook.com/vacivus

CARNAL DECAY

The ultimate Swiss grinding machine

Underground heroes in their native Switzerland, Carnal Decay's hybrid onslaught offers a sublime blend of DM, brutal hardcore and flat-out, swivel-eyed grind. Their latest album brims with weirdly accessible moments while removing your face.

Listen to: *Your Guts My Glory* (*You Owe You Pay*, 2017)

www.facebook.com/carnaldecayband

ULSECT

Technical, dissonant death metal

Featuring two members of avant-black metallers Dodecahedron, Ulsect's self-titled debut takes their reality-warping dynamics into the realms of death and post-metal, adding heaving riffs and doomy passages into their repertoire of whorls.

Listen to: *Moirae* (*Ulsect*, 2017)

www.ulsect.com

Ulsect: Dutch deviants from Tilburg

SO THIS IS SUFFERING

Obdurate bruisers on the deathcore trail

For anyone concerned about the future of deathcore, So This Is Suffering offer a defiant, jaw-shattering response. Insanely heavy but subtly sophisticated, the songs on new album *Palace Of The Pessimist* are full of sharp ideas and lacerating hooks. Suffering never felt so good.

Listen to: *Xenomorphic* (*Palace Of The Pessimist*, 2017)

www.facebook.com/sothisissuffering

So This Is Suffering: Southern Californian deathcore

CYTOTOXIN

German sci-fi death to rattle your teeth

Standard bearers for a new breed of DM that ups the brutality ante on every level, Cytotoxin are rapidly establishing themselves as one of Europe's most extreme bands. Light-speed blasting, wild technicality and a dash of futuristic fervour combine to make your skull explode. Nice.

Listen to: *Antigenesis* (*Gammageddon*, 2017)

www.facebook.com/cytotoxinmetal

IMAGES AT TWILIGHT

Extreme symphonic madness from Norway

The curiously named Images At Twilight play extreme symphonic metal, with a fair few death and black metal influences. There are shades of Bal-Sagoth and Carach Angren, but despite the orchestral touches, the vibe is less melodramatic.

Listen to: *Ninhagaz (The End Of An Era Chapter I)* (*Kings*, 2015)

www.facebook.com/imagesattwilight00

REPLACIRE

Extreme prog insanity from Boston, MA

Thriving in a self-constructed midpoint between pulverising extreme metal and forward-thinking

prog splendour, Replacire are inspirational madmen. Second album *Do Not Deviate* is an audacious celebration of insane ideas and mind-bending virtuosity. It also has huge tunes.
Listen to: *Moonbred Chains* (*Do Not Deviate*, 2017)
www.facebook.com/replacire

Replacire: barmy bastards from Boston, MA

LIGHT OF THE MORNING STAR
Gothic metal rarely sounded so severe
This London band are an unusual entity, with a sound that could be described as gothic metal, albeit with the 'metal' component drawn from the world of contemporary black/extreme metal. Sinister vampiric goodness.
Listen to: *Coffinwood* (*Nocta*, 2017)
www.facebook.com/lightofthemorningstar

A SENSE OF GRAVITY
Wild, extreme prog from the home of grunge
Doggedly putting Seattle back on the heavy map, A Sense Of Gravity's unhinged take on fervently proggy death is one of the most distinctive noises in metal right now. Scattershot structures and dizzying shred-worship collide: it's the sound of heavy music being catapulted into the future.
Listen to: *Echo Chasers* (*Atrament*, 2016)
www.facebook.com/asenseofgravity

HOWLS OF EBB
Death/black metal spells from San Francisco
This unique entity combine death and black metal with electrifying results, drawing on occultism and demonology to summon devastating hymns. Inventive songwriters and strong performers, they are unafraid to explore new territories.
Listen to: *Maat Mons' Fume* (*Cursus Impasse: The Pendlomic Vows*, 2016)
https://i-voidhangerrecords.bandcamp.com/

REPULSIVE VISION
Thrashy death metal the old way
An older band who have only kicked into gear recently, Cumbria's Repulsive Vision formed in 2010 but released their debut record this year. Turning the heads of DM fans, it's fast-paced, aggressive, sometimes thrashy, and satisfying.
Listen to: *Fragmentary* (*Look Past The Gore And See The Art*, 2017)
www.facebook.com/repulsivevision

POISON BLOOD
Black metal purity meets punk rock hate
A collaboration between members of Horseback and Krieg, Poison Blood are purveyors of dirty BM with an anarcho-punk edge. Not every band convincingly nails the blackened spirit, but this dastardly duo are masters of mystic malevolence.
Listen to: *Myths From The Desert* (*Poison Blood*, 2017)
poisonblood.bandcamp.com

WHOREDOM RIFE
Classic black metal for the 21st century
Whoredom Rife appeared three years ago and have already made a name for themselves with their unapologetically intense take on black metal. A subtle but effective updating of the Norwegian classics.
Listen to: *Cursing The Storm To Come* (*Dommedagskvad*, 2017)
whoredomrife.bandcamp.com

ABYSSIC
Grandiose symphonic death/doom
When the title track of a band's only album clocks in at 28 minutes, longer than many albums, you know they're not messing around. That record, last year's *A Winter's Tale*, marks these Norwegians out as masters of symphonic extreme metal.
Listen to: *A Winter's Tale* (*A Winter's Tale*, 2016)
www.facebook.com/abyssicofficial

LOCUST LEAVES
Greek progressive metal madness
Technically Locust Leaves aren't a new band, but they've only recently come to life, releasing their debut album *A Subtler Kind Of Light* this year following a split record in 2012 and apparent inactivity after that. A progressive and creative take on the extreme metal template.
Listen to: *Pillar (Vraxos)* (*A Subtler Kind Of Light*, 2017)
www.locustleaves.com

VIOLENT LIFE VIOLENT DEATH
Venomous riot-starters for a world gone mad
The soundtrack for an angry and hateful world, VLVD's face-ripping punk-metal attack is loud and nasty enough to make Trump shit his pants. The North Carolina crew's debut EP is a relentless adrenaline blast. The revolution starts here.
Listen to: *Straight Teeth* (*V-EP*, 2016)
www.facebook.com/violentlifeviolentdeath

Violent Life Violent Death: bringing the fight from Charlotte, North Carolina

HELLRIPPER
Scotland's king of the arcane mosh
A one-man blackened speed metal machine from Aberdeen, Hellripper does things the old-school way, but this is no lazy retro affair. Instead, the songs on current album *Coagulating Darkness* stab and slash like newly minted classics beamed in from the mid-80s underground, but laden with contemporary oomph.
Listen to: *Bastard Of Hades* (*Coagulating Darkness*, 2017)
www.facebook.com/hellripper1

SCÁTH NA DÉITHE
A crushing maelstrom of aggression
This Dublin-based duo formed in 2015 and are currently unsigned, but that's likely to change given the weighty bombardment of their debut album, *Pledge Nothing But Flesh*, released earlier this year. It's a fearsome cocktail of forboding death, black and doom metal.
Listen to: *Bloodless* (*Pledge Nothing But Flesh*, 2017)
www.facebook.com/scathnadeithe

ABHORRENT DECIMATION
DM supremacy from south London's suburbs
These death metal diehards have an unerring knack for delivering rapacious grooves and subtly irresistible hooks. Their debut album, *Miasmic Mutation*, was a brutal triumph, but new album *The Pardoner* is really grabbing people's attention. This is refined and smart 21st century extreme metal, full of grim lyrical insights and rebellious flair but never less than 100% brutal. If you saw them at Bloodstock in August, you'll know they destroy live, too. If UK death metal is on the rise, Abhorrent Decimation are riding the crest of the wave.
Listen to: *Conspire* (*The Pardoner*, 2017)
www.facebook.com/abhorrentdecimation

Abhorrent Decimation have made one helluva mark in their four years

TURIA
Driving hypnotic and surreal black metal
Formed in the Netherlands in 2014, Turia have released two albums of hypnotic, minimalist, fuzzy and otherworldly black metal. The songs are unrelenting and trance-like, with paint-stripping screams, chugging guitars and loose, even calming, melodies. Immerse yourself...
Listen to: *Dede Kondre* (*Dede Kondre*, 2017)
montturia.bandcamp.com

SLOW DEATH
Misanthropic fury with a lust for noise
When hardcore gets nasty, the results are often thrilling, but few modern bands sound as hellbent on destruction as Boston/Connecticut crew Slow Death. Using extreme noise as an extra weapon, their bursts of breakneck belligerence will make you want to smash everything in sight.
Listen to: *Hungry Rats* (*Hate-Filled World*, 2017)
slowdeathnoise.bandcamp.com

WILDSPEAKER
Dirty destruction with a hardcore soul
Blackened sludge warriors on a mission to terrify, Wildspeaker deal in organised chaos and scabrous, post-Converge riffing. New album *Spreading Adder* is a compelling exercise in pitch-black rage, but it swings like a megalodon's ballbag and kicks like a donkey on PCP.
Listen to: *Still Life* (*Spreading Adder*, 2017)
www.facebook.com/wildspeaker

RIVER BLACK
Groove metal terrorism from the US east coast
One of roughly 217 current bands featuring Municipal Waste legend Dave Witte on drums, River Black's rampaging groove metal assault stands out from the extremity crowd due to the sheer power of the band's riffs. Check out their eponymous debut and bang your head until it snaps off.
Listen to: *Shipwreck* (*River Black*, 2017)
www.facebook.com/riverblackmusic

VENOM PRISON

Savage DM with an important message

One of the best albums to emerge at the end of last year, *Animus* didn't just feel like one of the biggest blows from a UK death metal scene that was starting to throw haymakers, but a sign of extreme metal's well-worn hallmarks being recklessly fucked with. Proudly rallying against sexism in the scene while subverting classic death metal tropes, Venom Prison emerged as one of the most exciting bands our isle has produced in recent years, and even made their *Hammer* cover debut last month as a part of our special State Of The Nation address.

Listen to: *Abysmal Agony* (*Animus*, 2017)

venomprison.bandcamp.com

Venom Prison: the future of extreme metal is in safe hands

RIIVAUS

Icy, catchy-as-hell unholyness

A one-man black metal outfit, Riivaus hails from Finland and favours a traditional corpsepaint, forests and snow aesthetic. That's apt, because the riffing on this year's debut album is cold as ice, while also being surprisingly punky and catchy, making for an irresistible onslaught.

Listen to: *Uhrirovio* (*Lyöden Taudein Ja Kirouksin*, 2017)

www.facebook.com/riivaus

CHAOS TRIGGER

Rise of the British neck-wreckers

Unsung heroes of the UK scene, Wales's Chaos Trigger draw from death metal, hardcore, groove metal and grind, but the end result of that cross-pollination is thrillingly individual. *Degenerate Matter* is one of 2017's slow-burning gems: the riffs, the rage, the intensity… what's not to like?

Listen to: *Binary* (*Degenerate Matter*, 2017)

www.facebook.com/chaostrigger

Chaos Trigger: Welsh wonders

TCHORNOBOG

Creepy and immersive metal for brave souls

The claustrophobic and crushing tunes of Tchornobog are not for the fainthearted, combining black, death and doom metal in lengthy and disturbing fashion. A single album, released this year, is the only evidence of this one-man US-based act – who knows what the future will hold?

Listen to: *I: The Vomiting Tchornobog (Slithering Gods of Cognitive Dissonance)* (*Tchornobog*, 2017)

www.facebook.com/tchornobog

RAISED BY OWLS

British grind upstarts riff on our culture

On debut album *The Great British Grind Off*, Derby's Raised By Owls take on hallowed British institutions such as the *Bake Off* of its title, Harry Potter, *Chuckle Vision*… and David Cameron. Plus, the artwork from Jim'll Paint It is nothing short of genius. Good, unclean fun.

Listen to: *The Great British Grind Off* (*The Great British Grind Off*, 2016)

https://raisedbyowls.bandcamp.com

IN REVERENCE

Mind-melting death metal

Sweden is hardly a stranger to kickass death metal, and this Stockholm collective produced one of the finest extreme metal albums of 2017 so far with the regal *The Selected Breed*. Those impatient for a new Behemoth album could do worse than check out these crushers.

Listen to: *Prometheus* (*The Selected Breed*, 2017)

www.facebook.com/inreverence

TRIVERSE MASSACRE

Cumbrian crushers go for the throat

Like being clubbed to death by robots, Triverse Massacre's precise, future-death assault is terrifying but impossible to ignore. Latest EP *Hades* suggests that this Carlisle quintet have the chops, the songs and the intensity to make a devastating impact.

Listen to: *Styx* (*Hades*, 2017)

www.facebook.com/triversemassacre

Triverse Massacre: watch these groove death metallers rise

TARNKAPPE

Underrated black metal with passion

Appearing in 2014 with debut album *Tussen Hun En De Zon* (Between Them And The Sun), this Netherlands trio offer embittered yet stirring black metal, played with total zeal. Last year's *Winterwaker* is a step up, staying true to its claim of summoning "the Cold spirit from the North".

Listen to: *Aan De Aarde Gebonden* (*Winterwaker*, 2016)

www.facebook.com/tarnkappeblackmetal

NECROMANIAC

London-based resurrection of 80s evil

With Spanish, Polish and Greek contributors, Necromaniac transport the listener back to a time before the thrash, death and black metal genres properly parted ways, recalling the darkness of early Slayer, Celtic Frost and more with a furiously organic assault.

Listen to: *Underneath The Crucifix* (*Morbid Metal* demo, 2015)

necromaniac.bandcamp.com

CULT OF EIBON

Lycanthropic 90s Greece exhumed from a grave

You'd never know Athens' *Cult Of Eibon* formed in 2015. Channelling the glory of the heavy metal-inspired, synth-augmented Greek black metal bands of the 1990s, such as Necromantia, Varathron and Rotting Christ, their classic sound belies their young age.

Listen to: *Wolf Blood Communion* (*Lycan Twilight Sorcery*, 2017)

www.facebook.com/thecultofeibon

GAOTH

Soulful and slow-burning black metal

A one-man outfit from Ireland, Gaoth entered the scene last year, releasing the impressively mature debut album *Dying Season's Glory* – initially a self-release, but soon reissued by Northern Silence Productions. Emotive, moving and atmospheric, with plenty of clean guitars and forest vibes.

Listen to: *Weeping Of The Fens* (*Dying Season's Glory*, 2016)

www.facebook.com/gaothofficial

Gaoth: even more impressive when you consider it's the work of one person

ORM

Epic black metal from darkest Denmark

Releasing their self-titled debut album this year, Orm are rising stars. Epic and majestic black metal is the order of the day, with harsh dual vocals and ethereal backing vocals cutting through the riffs to elevate their songs.

Listen to: *A Tree Ablaze/Yggdrasil Brænder* (*Orm*, 2017)

ormband.bandcamp.com

FELLWARDEN

Atmospheric folky black metal from London

Featuring The Watcher and Havenless of premier UK black/post-black outfit Fen, Fellwarden sees the duo pursuing similarly dreamy and introspective landscapes. Shimmering guitars, considered songwriting and folky black metal overtones make this one for fans of Agalloch… and Fen, obviously.

Listen to: *Wayfarer Eternal* (*Oathbearer*, 2017)

fellwarden.bandcamp.com

Fellwarden: check out the majestic and mournful glory of *Oathbearer* immediately

KADAVERDISCIPLIN

Flat-out Swedish devilry with fire in its belly

The latest band to erupt from Sweden's frequently seminal black metal scene, these blackhearted bastards will thrill fans of Marduk, Watain and Dark Funeral with their remorseless and necrotized but very metal onslaught. Satan is real and cranked up to 11.

Listen to: *Death Supremacy* (*Death Supremacy*, 2017)

www.facebook.com/kadaverdisciplin

MYRKUR

MAREridt

On *Mareridt*, **MYRKUR** explores deeper into the mysterious and the feminine with 11 tracks that further progress her visionary blend of gorgeous, stirring melodies, dark folk passages, choral arrangements and superb, horrific beauty.

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EXHUMED

DEATH REVENGE

EXHUMED reemerge with their disgusting new full-length **Death Revenge,** a macabre concept album about a series of brutal murders and grave robberies in 1820's Scotland!

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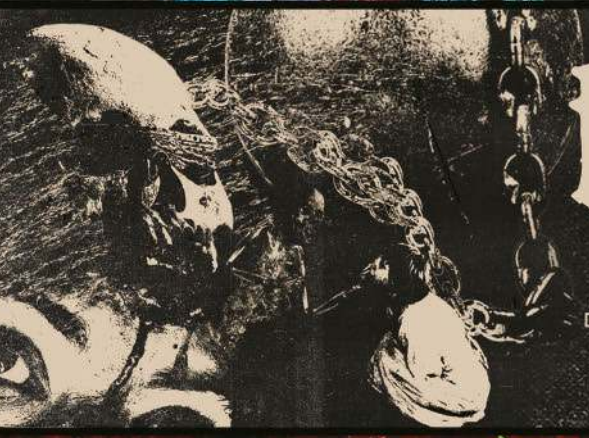

Primitive Man

caustic

Denver's nihilistic trio **PRIMITIVE MAN** return with **Caustic**, their second full-length offering of soul-crushing blackened doom and noise-ridden claustrophobia.

OCTOBER 6 ON CD/2xLP/DIGITAL

HAEMORRHAGE

WE ARE THE GORE

HAEMORRHAGE take their nauseating blend of scalpel-sharp riffs, triple threat guttural vocals, and bone-scraping rhythms to a new extreme across 14 tracks and 35 blood-soaked minutes of pathological gore!

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CJ is back in business, clean and focused

Undivided Ascension

CJ McMahon quit Aussie deathcore crushers Thy Art Is Murder under a cloud of desperation and drug addiction. Now he's back, he's clean and he's swinging for greatness

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

During his time away from Thy Art Is Murder, vocalist CJ McMahon would get up at the crack of dawn. Instead of heading to a venue or a studio, he would get stuck into a day's graft as a stonemason in his native Sydney, putting in the hours to build the kitchens and bathrooms of suburban dreams. He made the surprise career move after realising he was on a downward spiral – and it wasn't easy.

"It's hard work lifting heavy, fucking brutal stone," he says. "I just needed to clean my life up, get off the drugs, detox my body, sort my fucking brain out, and be happy that I'm alive again."

CJ announced his departure from Thy Art Is Murder via Facebook in December 2015, citing financial ruin and homesickness as key reasons. It was one of the year's most shocking moments; following the release of the savage, religion-bating *Holy War* in June, the band had been riding the crest of a wave. But offstage, things hadn't been right for a while.

"It had been coming for years," CJ sighs. "I'd be touring so much that I wouldn't see my family for 10 months. Money was always the main issue; we live in the most expensive city in the world, so when I was there I couldn't pay for anything. I couldn't afford health insurance. I recently had an impacted wisdom tooth removed and it cost me a thousand dollars. It's been killing me for years, but I just had to put up with it."

With the weight of the world on his shoulders, CJ turned to drugs to block out his frustrations, becoming a user and a dealer. He shut himself off from everyone, including his bandmates, who were forced to suffer in silence as he "just refused to engage" with them.

"I was trying to get that high I had onstage, and to repress the feeling of missing my family and having no money," he remembers. "It was a vicious circle that I was spiralling in. I pretty much OD'd twice in that time, and one day I woke up in LA after a massive drink and coke bender feeling angry and frustrated, and I just went, 'That's it... I'm not doing this anymore.' And I went home."

It's obvious from CJ's tone, just as it was obvious from his statement, that he was craving a normal life: job security, financial stability, a social support network. When he quit the band, he took Xmas off and then got straight to work as a stonemason with his father-in-law and brother-in-law. The strict routine not only gave him the above, but allowed him to block out his destructive thoughts.

"I was feeling completely physically wrecked, getting up at half five and finishing at seven, but it was good that I could support me and my wife," he says. "I'd be so tired that I'd just sleep, so it was helping me mentally, too. I was too exhausted to dwell on things or to engage with the people who'd be a negative influence on me."

With a more regimented lifestyle in place, CJ used willpower to get clean, but soon began to miss Thy Art. In February 2016, the band headed to Europe in support of Parkway Drive, with interim singer Nick Arthur filling in, for some of the biggest shows of their career – including one at London's 5,000-capacity Brixton Academy. It was a huge opportunity, yet CJ was on the other side of the world.

"EDDIE HERMIDA HAS LOST HIS THRONE"

CJ FEELS THE SUICIDE SILENCE FRONTMAN IS WAY TOO SALTY TOWARDS THE DEATHCORE SCENE

"I had a mate in London who sent me footage of the crowd chanting 'CJ' before they came out," he remembers. "That made me feel good, but it also made me feel really bad that I left the boys in that situation. Every time I saw them on Instagram doing these crazy shows... it was like breaking up with a girl and being fine with it, then seeing she had a new boyfriend and being like, 'He's not fucking good enough for her!' I'd be lying if I said that wasn't happening."

With frustrations growing, it was a chance meeting with an old bandmate that sowed the seeds for his return. CJ went to a house party, and Sean [Delander, guitar] happened to be there. The pair hadn't seen each other for six months, and had lots to catch up on.

"I couldn't sleep that night, just thinking about the band. I messaged him the next day and said, 'I wish things were different, I wish I hadn't gone, my life sucks – I don't even have time to spend the money I make because I'm working so much.' And he replied, 'Fuck it, it's easy. Just come back.'"

He joined Thy Art Is Murder at practice and his return was made official in January, followed by the single *No Absolution*. It inadvertently sparked a war of words with Suicide Silence's Eddie Hermida, who accused Thy Art of being stuck in a deathcore rut, while his own band had shunned the genre for their new single, *Doris*.

Thy Art responded by making a set of Trump-style 'Make Deathcore Great Again' baseball caps, seemingly mocking both Eddie's comments and his music. After Suicide Silence released their polarising, self-titled album, the beef escalated to the point where Eddie called CJ a sellout. "A person who is looking for money and talks about money and focuses on money when they're making music is a complete sellout," he told the website Live Metal. "They're literally going, 'Hey, we're not sellouts, but please buy this hat.'"

"He's trying to drag us down, because the king of the mountain has lost his throne. And the new young prince has risen to be the supreme leader," responds CJ. "He's like, 'Fuck this. If I'm going down, I'm taking these cunts with me!' And it's worked out the opposite. If I didn't come back and I joined 5 Seconds Of Summer or became an EDM DJ then, yeah, I get it. But I'm cleaner and stronger. I really don't give a fuck what those salty fuckers have to say about me."

But he is hoping that upcoming album, *Dear Desolation*, which leans less heavily on the 'core' and focuses more on barbaric death metal and hulking arena grooves, will propel them beyond the deathcore scene and to bigger stages.

"We want to be able to play shows with bands like Lamb Of God, and maybe look toward being one of those bands in the future," CJ says. "People like to pin the whole deathcore thing on us, but we're more than that on this record. We're pushing into wider metal territories, because we want to be a big band, and I believe that if we work hard that's a realistic goal for us."

With a more focused CJ McMahon back, they might have a chance.

***DEAR DESOLATION* IS OUT NOW VIA NUCLEAR BLAST**

BLAST!

As Nuclear Blast blow out the candles on their 30th birthday cake, we travel to Germany to celebrate the rise of one of metal's most enduring and influential labels

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY • LIVE PICTURES: ROMAN@SILVERDUST

There are many excellent places to watch a thunderstorm break on the horizon, but 50 feet off the ground in a steel gantry at a Bavarian metal festival isn't one of them. In any other situation, the cracking thunder, forked lightning and sheets of biblical rain heading towards us would be an impressive spectacle. Right now, the threat of imminent death by electrocution or drowning is putting a bit of a dampener on the situation.

Still, it's a fitting backdrop to today's entertainment. The Friday of the Summer Breeze festival has been rechristened the Blast Bash to mark the 30th anniversary of powerhouse German label Nuclear Blast. The whole of the main stage bill is given over entirely to NB bands, from Battle Beast, Hatebreed and Epica to Children Of Bodom and Teutonic thrash icons Kreator. The storm heading our way has got nothing on the one that's been happening onstage all day.

At ground level, a 49-year-old blond-haired man is watching everything unfold with a quiet pride. This is Markus Staiger, the man who founded Nuclear Blast 30 years ago in the small town of Donzdorf and has successfully steered it through the sort of choppy waters that have holed so many other labels.

Like the rest of the 40,000-strong Summer Breeze crowd, Markus is a huge music fan. What separates him is that he happens to run one of the most successful metal labels in history. One that started out as a strictly DIY operation run from his parents' house to put out records by US death, grind and hardcore bands has branched out in unimaginable ways, musically and commercially. Today, 30 years after he started it, Nuclear Blast is one of metal's biggest players.

"I listened to Slayer when I was 15 years old – I didn't know then that I would start a label, let alone that they would be on it," says Markus. "The same with Kreator and Testament and Exodus. That's fucking extraordinary. It makes me very happy."

Nuclear Blast was far from the first independent label to emerge from the primal soup of the 1980s underground metal scene. The likes of Roadrunner, Metal Blade, Music For Nations, Megaforce and Earache were all already home to a battalion of influential (and some not-so-influential) bands who couldn't get a look-in on major labels.

Markus had set up a mail order company to sell his favourite bands' albums. But he wanted to take it to another level. And so, at the age of 21, armed with 7,000 German Marks (roughly £3,300), he founded Nuclear Blast, its name partly inspired by US hardcore band Bl'ast.

"I first knew Markus before he set up Nuclear Blast," says Kreator singer Mille Petrozza, whose band signed to the label in 2010. "He was a tape trader. He was super-passionate about music even back then."

30 YEARS OF NUCLEAR BLAST

Nightwish with former singer Tarja: their *Once* album broke Nuclear Blast records

RADIUS

The first album to be released on Nuclear Blast was *Senseless Death*, a compilation of US hardcore and crossover bands including Attitude, Dehumanizers and Sacred Denial (the album's cover was designed by Markus's brother-in-law). It was followed in short order by Condemned's *Humanoid Or Biomechanoid* and Impulse Manslaughter's debut album.

The early years were hard. Markus would work through the night in his parents' house, speaking to bands and packaging up albums to be mailed out. There were cashflow problems – at one point he even handed over the papers for his car as security.

"You sell some records, you get some money, you sign bigger bands, you need more money for bigger advances," says Markus. "It took me about seven or eight years until my bank account was back at zero."

The financial high-wire act was worth it. Nuclear Blast began to establish itself as a force to be reckoned with on the underground scene, thanks to a roster that included the likes of Benediction (featuring future Napalm Death vocalist Barney Greenway), New Orleans thrashers Incubus (not to be confused with the nu metal band of the same name) and Chicago death metal heavyweights Master.

Nuclear Blast founder Markus Staiger (centre, bottom row) with Suicide Silence and their manager (second from right)

"THE BANDS ON NUCLEAR BLAST ALL HAVE AN ATTITUDE"

THEY MIGHT SOUND DIFFERENT TO EACH OTHER, BUT THEY'RE ALL KEEPING IT HEAVY

In Flames' influential *The Jester Race* was released on NB

Dimmu Borgir are a perfect example of NB's varied roster

Only Nuclear Blast would take a chance on Hypocrisy

Hatebreed's Jamey Jasta loves the fact NB founder Markus is so passionate about music

Dutch symphonic metallers Epica have been with NB for many years

One key early signing was a bunch of greenhorn Swedish thrashers named Meshuggah, whose debut album, *Contradictions Collapse*, was released in 1991 (catalogue number NB409). Another was fellow Swedes Hypocrisy, whose own debut, *Penetralia*, emerged the following year.

"I wasn't aware of Nuclear Blast until we started looking to get a label," says Hypocrisy frontman Peter Tägtgren. "We sent our music to everyone and Nuclear Blast was the only one that answered back, two days after we sent it. We were an unknown band, so we only got a very small budget to record the album. But no one else would give us a chance."

With their most notable contemporary, Roadrunner, outgrowing its own death metal and hardcore roots, Markus spotted a gap in the market. Over the next few years, he bulked out the NB roster with quality extreme metal.

"All the bands that I liked when I was young were on Nuclear Blast, like Amorphis," says Mark Jansen of Dutch symphonic metallers Epica, who've been with NB since the late 00s. "But I didn't recognise a sound, more like an *attitude*. You didn't get that anywhere else."

A turning point came in 1997 when the label released pivotal albums by two radically different bands: *Glory To The Brave* by power metal kingpins Hammerfall and Dimmu Borgir's symphonic *Enthrone Darkness Triumphant*. Suddenly, Nuclear Blast had transcended its roots as an extreme metal label. The flipside is that it was perceived as a distinctly German proposition peddling a uniquely – some might say cheesy – strain of Middle-European metal.

"I'm not sure that's accurate," argues Hatebreed's Jamey Jasta, whose band signed to NB worldwide for their 2016 album *The Concrete Confessional*. "I had a Meshuggah *Destroy Erase Improve* poster on my bedroom wall next to Slash and Axl and Ozzy and Randy. I actually think it really came into its own in America way before people think it did."

The last two decades have been a boom time for Nuclear Blast. Its successes are etched in company lore: Meshuggah's *Nothing* (the first NB album to crack the US Top 200 in 2002); Nightwish's *Once* (the label's best-selling album when it was released in 2004, a record it still holds today); Slayer's *Repentless* (reached Number 4 in the US in 2015, the highest-charting Stateside album).

There are other, less tangible triumphs – not least the unexpected resurrection of the moribund thrash genre courtesy of acclaimed albums from the likes of Exodus, Testament, Kreator, Overkill and more.

"One of my proudest moments was basically telling the world in 2003 that Exodus were super-relevant," says Gerardo Martinez, general manager of Nuclear Blast's US wing. "You gotta remember that no one gave a flying eff about thrash bands. Then there's a band like Dimmu Borgir, who were on the *Hellboy* trailer – that was some achievement."

Inevitably, there have been plenty of failures, too. Gerardo names Virginia death metallers Arsis as one of the label's biggest disappointments. "They had so much potential but they basically self-destructed," he says.

Similarly, there have been those bands who slipped through the net; Gerardo says current NB mainstays Lamb Of God received knockbacks from the label early in their career.

But perhaps the biggest reflection of Nuclear Blast's success is its continued existence. Where many of its original peers have either gone under or been subsumed into major labels, NB hasn't just survived, it has prospered. The demise of Roadrunner in its original independent form undoubtedly helped strengthen Nuclear Blast's position in the market, though Gerardo denies that it has all been positive.

"If anything, it was bad for the scene," he says. "The less independent labels that are out there, the harder it is for bands to get their music out there. Sure, we were able to get bands out of that explosion, like Fear Factory or Machine Head. But we were already really established by that point." ➤

"NO OTHER LABEL WOULD GIVE US A CHANCE"

HYPOCRISY'S PETER TÄGTGREN WAS GRATEFUL THAT NUCLEAR BLAST TOOK NOTICE

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CLASSIC ROCK

Kreator's Mille Petrozza knew Markus as a tape trader before he set up Nuclear Blast

"I LOVE EVERY SECOND OF OUR LABEL'S MUSIC"

FOUNDER MARKUS STAIGER IS AS PASSIONATE ABOUT AMERICAN NEWBIES SINK THE SHIP AS MESHUGGAH

But then the German label is different to many of its current and former contemporaries, in that it has no distinct musical identity. Or rather it has many: death metal sits next to metalcore, symphonic metal bands rub shoulders with dyed-in-the-wool hardcore, retro-rock shares oxygen with doom metal.

As the worst of the storm passes just off to our left at Summer Breeze, leaving the crowd drenched but thankfully not electrocuted, Markus Staiger continues to be the centre of everyone's offstage attention.

"I like his passion," says Jamey Jasta. "Anybody who knows the old bands, the Exploiteds, the Agnostic Fronts, the Discharges, but then is telling me about fucking Suicide Silence and We Came As Romans with the same fervour and enthusiasm is a real music guy."

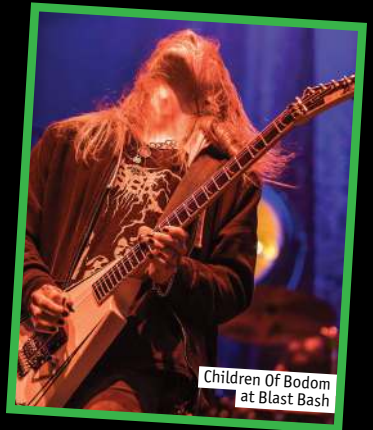
This much is true. A few hours earlier, *Hammer* bumped into Marcus at our shared hotel. Before introductions had been properly made, he was already playing a song on his iPhone by new US band Sink The Ship, one of the latest signings to Sharptone, an NB offshoot label that focuses on rock and alternative music (another subsidiary label, Arising Empire, is home to up-and-coming metalcore and punk bands).

"It was important to open the label to all subgenres," says Markus. "After the death metal boom, it was important to have bands like Hammerfall or Primal Fear. Today, on the one hand you have Meshuggah, on the other you have a band like Threshold and on the other you have Sink The Ship. I love every second of it all."

That, as much as anything, is the secret of Nuclear Blast's success: like all the best labels, NB is run by the fans for the fans. Metal needs its mavericks and its maverick labels.

"It goes against the grain," says Epica's Mark Jansen. "Every time I come in their office, everybody's listening to metal. That's what I want. I don't want to be with a label where everyone's thinking about money and profit." ✠

THE *30 YEARS OF NUCLEAR BLAST* ANNIVERSARY COMPILATION DVD + 4CD SET IS OUT NOW, FEATURING BANDS SUCH AS NIGHTWISH, MESHUGGAH AND CRADLE OF FILTH. EPICA PLAY A *HAMMER*-SPONSORED TOUR NEXT APRIL



Children Of Bodom at Blast Bash

Blast Bash: the gantry afforded a perfect view of the bands... and the approaching storm

NUCLEAR FAMILY

A brief history of the last three decades of heavy

1987
Markus Staiger founds Nuclear Blast in his hometown of Donzdorf. The first record released on the label is the compilation *Senseless Death*.

1990
Albums by death metal bands Atrocity, Master and Incubus sell more than 30,000 copies each.

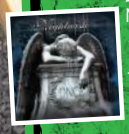
1991
Meshuggah's debut album, *Contradictions Collapse*, is released. The band remain on Nuclear Blast to this day.

1995
Gorefest's *Erase* becomes the first Nuclear Blast album to enter the German charts, reaching Number 82.

1996
In Flames' breakthrough second album, *The Jester Race*, is released.

1997
Hammerfall become the label's first power metal success story when their debut album, *Glory To The Brave*, reaches the German Top 40.

2002
Meshuggah become the first Nuclear Blast band to break into the US Top 200, when *Nothing* reaches Number 165.



2004
Nightwish's *Once* becomes the biggest-selling album released by Nuclear Blast. Dimmu Borgir become the first black metal band to play on the US Ozzfest tour, helping to properly establish the label as a force on the US metal scene.

2008
Testament release their acclaimed comeback album, *The Formation Of Damnation*, adding weight to a thrash revival that also includes NB labelmates Exodus, Overkill and Death Angel.

2012
Nuclear Blast recruit several former executives from the recently downsized Roadrunner Records, including A&R guru Monte Conner and UK MD Mark Palmer.

2013
The label dips its toes into the world of retro rock with *Devil Man*, the second EP from Swedish psych-rockers Blues Pills.

2014
Nuclear Blast release Suicide Silence's *You Can't Stop Me* – the first album since the death of frontman Mitch Lucker.

2015
Slayer's *Repentless* debuts at Number 4 in the Billboard Chart – Nuclear Blast's highest charting album in the US.

2016
Offshoot Sharptone Records is launched as a home for rock and alternative music. Its roster includes Miss May I, Don Broco and Emmure.

2017
Nuclear Blast celebrates its 30th birthday.

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PROGRESSIVE COMPULSIVE

Best known as Ihsahn's backing band, Norwegian prog-metallers Leprous are emerging as a powerful force in their own right, driven by twisting genres into melancholic new sounds

WORDS: DOM LAWSON

With a population of little over 12,000 people, the Norwegian town of Notodden doesn't seem the most likely breeding ground for musical legends. The fact that this small, snow-blasted settlement has already given the world black metal icons Emperor is startling enough, but now there is a second phenomenon emerging from those streets: prog metal ingénues Leprous.

Notodden's second-most celebrated band are perhaps best known as the musicians that backed Emperor frontman Ihsahn when he first hit the road as a solo artist back in 2009, but since that educational trial-by-fire they have steadily built their own unique reputation as fearless contemporary groundbreakers. But to emphasise how tiny Notodden is, it's worth noting that founder member/frontman Einar Solberg is Ihsahn's brother-in-law.

"He's been like a brother to me since I was a little kid," Einar says today. "When we did the shows with him, *that* was the moment when we started taking Leprous more seriously. When we got the offer, it was like, 'OK, this is for real now!' It wasn't like playing at the local youth club anymore. For a while we rehearsed more Ihsahn stuff than Leprous stuff, just to get it up to the level that was needed. There was a lot of pressure on us, playing with a legend! I mean, we celebrate Xmas together, but it's still the guy from Emperor, you know?"

Formed by Einar and his friends at the local youth club in Notodden back at the dawn of the century, Leprous began life as a shambolic punk rock band, "because that was all we could manage to play!" But by the time Ihsahn requested their services, they had evolved into something wildly distinctive and very much in tune with a progressive metal renaissance that was really beginning to gain momentum.

"HE'S BEEN LIKE A BROTHER TO ME"

ALMOST LITERALLY - IHSAHN AND EINAR ARE BROTHER-IN-LAWS

Early albums like debut *Tall Poppy Syndrome* in 2009, and its bewildering follow-up, 2011's *Bilateral*, bore little resemblance to anything from the black metal world, but Einar admits that his mentor's influence on Leprous has been huge and lasting.

"He has *always* done his own thing, regardless of expectation," he notes. "That's what we've done, too. We exist more in the prog scene, of course, and that's not quite as conservative as some of the black metal fans can be, so it's a smaller risk for us than for him, ha ha! But he's a humble person, too. We all admire that and we think it's really important to never take any of this for granted."

While Norway is still regarded as the home of black metal, Leprous have spent the last decade quietly going about the business of making genuinely strange, dark and beautiful music that has very little to do with their country's most notorious subgenre, Emperor included. There is something intrinsically mysterious about the songs Einar writes, both musically and in terms of the hazy and often surreal imagery that inform his lyrics.

That mystery has certainly helped to propel Leprous to the forefront of the modern prog scene, and the new album's title has already sent many fans scurrying to Google to attempt to decipher exactly what Einar is writing about this time. 'Malina' means about 50 different things, ranging from doomed heroines in Inuit mythology to Slovakian rivers, so a proper explanation is required…

"Everyone seems to have a different theory, but it's actually very simple," Einar chuckles. "It means 'raspberries' in an old Slavic language. The story behind it is probably not what you would expect. I was in Georgia – the country, not the state in America – at my brother's wedding, and I was walking around, and there was this super-old woman maybe between 80 and 90, who could barely walk, but she was pacing around all day selling raspberries, saying, 'Malina, malina, malina!' It made such a huge impression on me and so I wrote the lyrics and the title just stuck. It's not a great mystery really, ha!"

Given the inspiration for the title, it doesn't seem unreasonable to suggest that Leprous are making some kind of enraged statement about inequality in society on *Malina*. Einar is keen to point out that the album is not a concept record in any way and that the songs are all distinct and separate, and yet there is an underlying disquiet to this music that feels all too appropriate for the turbulent present day.

"Well, there is the common thread that it's all pretty melancholic," he shrugs. "Even though some of it may *seem* political, it doesn't necessarily represent the feelings of the whole band, if that makes sense. We're not radical left-wing guys as such, we just choose to question everything. Obviously what's going on in the world has some effect on my overall mood as a composer, but some of the new songs have nothing at all to do with politics. The last song, *The Last Milestone*, is about something deeply personal. That's the most depressing song I've ever written and it was hard to record it. But I'm not going to talk about it, sorry!"

Tricky to pin down but easy to adore, Leprous may not be making music for the masses, but they are marching onwards and upwards regardless. *Malina* pulls off the neat trick of being both an album custom-built for these eclectic, pick'n'mix times *and* a classic example of the album as a piece of deep, challenging art. Ultimately, Notodden was never going to be big enough to contain them. These days, Leprous are far too busy to help Ihsahn out, and you suspect that the Emperor legend wouldn't have it any other way.

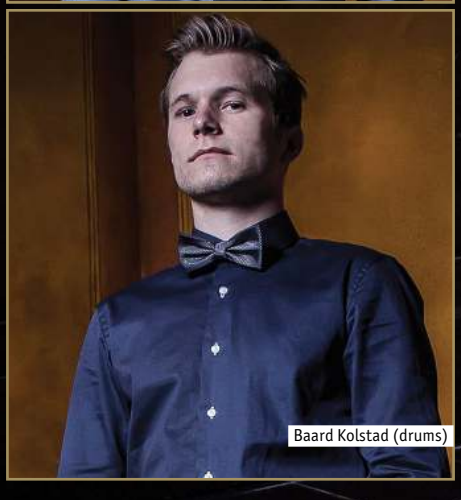
"Next year is going to be extremely busy," Einar concludes. "We have a very stable band now, with very dedicated people, and we're not losing money anymore. We're doing a couple of shows in the UK and a full tour in Europe this autumn with Agent Fresco. Finally, everything is going great. It took a long time. We like to say it took 15 years before we earned our first penny!" ✠

***MALINA* IS OUT NOW VIA INSIDEOUT. LEPROUS PLAY THE UK IN NOVEMBER – SEE P.111**

Simen Daniel Børven (bass)

Robin Ognedal (guitars)

Tor Oddmund Suhrke (guitars, backing vocals)


Baard Kolstad (drums)

Einar Solberg (vocals, keyboards)

COAST HARDCORE

From the ashes of the violent 90s Boston hardcore scene rose a group of bands who would change rock music forever. This is their story.

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

While 1980s LA had Black Flag, New York was famed for Agnostic Front and Cro-Mags, and Washington DC boasted Bad Brains and Minor Threat, Boston's output was lower key. Gang Green, Negative FX, DYS and many other bands released on independent label Taang Records during that period are not as familiar, and SS Decontrol are perhaps better known for their militant, straight-edge stance than their music. But their impact was just as keenly felt, and would spawn a whole new Boston scene.

"I wasn't old enough to see those bands, but also wasn't young enough to not have them as mandatory listening when getting into hardcore," says Wes Eisold, who would go on to form American Nightmare. "SSD, DYS, Slapshot, [1982's] *This Is Boston Not L.A.* compilation, Siege... they were all tapes I had in high school."

Ultimately, though, there was one thing the Boston hardcore scene *was* famous for: violence. Stephen Brodsky, who'd later form Cave In, remembers his earliest experiences of local hardcore shows in the late 80s at a place called the Red Barn in North Andover, an hour north of town. He and his best friend were metalheads, and the crowd didn't take kindly to them.

"The older hardcore kids didn't like the looks of us, and we got targeted with some dumb violent shit," he says. "My guess is that by the time Boston found its wave, not only was the city ready to claim its due, but it did so with a force of such rabid anger and intensity that instigated sheer violence and hostility – which definitely adds a certain fire to this story."

As violence marred the scene, younger musicians grew tired of the status quo, and a new community began to develop. Stephen pinpoints Converge as the catalyst for change, both in sound and approach. When he got a tape of their debut album, 1994's *Halo In A Haystack*, from future Cave In bassist Adam McGrath, it changed his life.

"It was totally transformative for me, because I was hearing a local band doing something fresh with heavy music," he explains. "Not only did it make me wanna follow that path, it allowed me to bond more closely with people like Adam who shared a similar vision. It turned out that a lot of people in my immediate area felt the same way."

"I remember getting a tape of [1996's] *Petitioning The Empty Sky* before it came out," says New Mexico native Aaron Turner, who chose to attend college in Boston mainly to be closer to its burgeoning scene, and would later form Isis. "I went back to my bedroom and put it on, and just sat on the floor open-mouthed. I knew they were good, but... I was just blown away."

After moving to Boston, Aaron dived into the scene headfirst by founding Hydra Head Records, who would go on to sign Cave In. It was a key moment in expanding the reach of the scene, and the scope of its sound.

"When I moved down, one of the first shows I saw was [New York hardcore punks] Earth Crisis supported by Cave In," he tells us. "I was there for Earth Crisis, but I was immediately captivated by Cave In, even though they were in their infancy. I was very energised by seeing a band that were even younger than me so invested in what they were doing and not afraid to try things. I wanted to be an active participant."

FLYERS: CHRIS WRENN

"THE HARDCORE KIDS TARGETED US WITH DUMB VIOLENCE"

CAVE IN'S STEPHEN BRODSKY WAS ATTACKED AT HARDCORE SHOWS BECAUSE OF HIS LOOK

With the violence of early hardcore still dominating the central city area, younger bands were forced to find their own niche in Boston's satellite cities, such as Worcester and New Hampshire.

"It was the only place the younger bands could play shows," says Converge vocalist Jacob Bannon. "It was where many of us met. I've got pictures of us playing in New Hampshire in 1997 with American Nightmare's Wes also on stage in a Lifetime [90s New Jersey punks] shirt; everyone was connected through the music." >

Cave In: blame Converge for everything
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THIS IS HARDCORE

Converge: their *Jane Doe* album is an undisputed classic

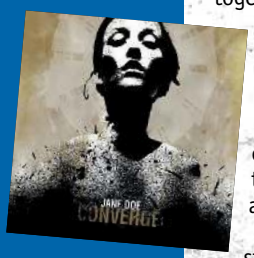
DUNCAN EVERSON

The albums that defined the Boston scene

THE HOPE CONSPIRACY
Cold Blue (2000)
Hope Con's 2000 debut album might not have been heard by many people at the time, but looking back it's the wildest album they ever put out. The youthful vigour and driving metallic hardcore on songs such as *Fragile* and *Youth And Its Burden* still singe eyebrows today.

CAVE IN
Jupiter (2000)
Proving that hardcore had more to it than just aggression, Cave In's second album tore up the blueprint for metallic hardcore and pieced it back together using spacey prog rock, delicate melodies and technically dazzling time signatures. Not just one of the greatest albums of its time, one of the bravest, too.

AMERICAN NIGHTMARE
Background Music (2001)
Taking classic hardcore and filtering it through a poetically sensitive lead vocalist with a penchant for gothic imagery, AN's debut tore a hole in the underground. Their influence took on a life of its own after they disbanded, but whether you were there from the start or heard them only recently, *Background Music* is an unstoppable trip.



CONVERGE
Jane Doe (2001)
The album that truly put this wave of musicians on the map around the world, *Jane Doe* remains a benchmark release and an almost impossible standard for any likeminded band to live up to. A cathartic and challenging piece of art that is still totally vital today.

ISIS
Oceanic (2002)
Taking their cues from Neurosis's punk-turned-psychedelic-trip blueprint, Aaron Turner and co's second record is a quantum leap from debut *Celestial*. Pushing their ambient tendencies even further, but retaining the raw heaviness that characterised so many Boston bands, this is a sweet spot in the history of post-metal.

Following the lead of Converge, Boston soon became a hub for eclectic, intelligent and unique hardcore punk. Suddenly, the scene was populated by Deadguy, Cave In, Bane, American Nightmare, The Hope Conspiracy and more, all twisting hardcore into new shapes and taking influence from anything they could get their ears on.

"Working with Hydra Head elevated things for Cave In," says Stephen. "Aaron pooled together so much great stuff through the label, and our minds were blown by all the rad heavy music happening around us. In the midst of writing [2000's] *Jupiter*, Cave In opened a bunch of shows for Neurosis, who had just released *Times Of Grace*, and everyone in our camp was floored by it. We thought that was a good direction to go in; atmospheric heaviness over technical ability."

With a raft of wildly exciting bands, all starting to forge their own sonic path, and Aaron's new label on hand to help shine light upon them, the scene began to draw envious glances from across the underground.

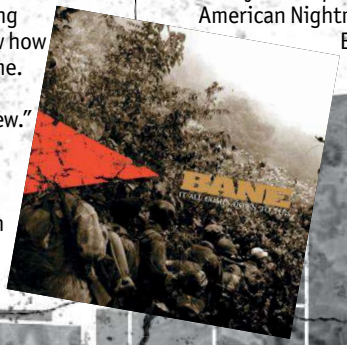
"I wasn't really aware how exciting it was at the start," Aaron says. "But there were times where I realised something important was happening. I saw how it was changing things around me. The stage was set where people were prepared for something new."

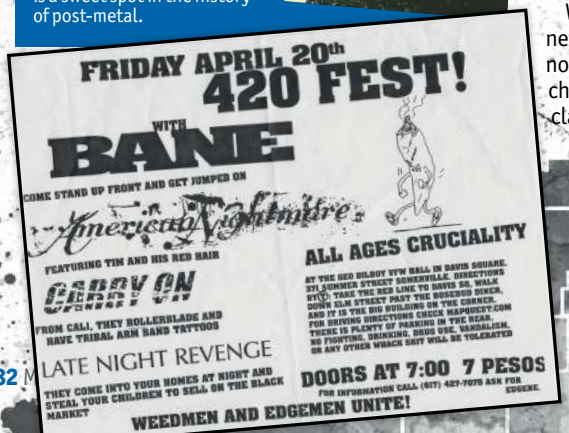
Whatever this "something new" was, there seemed to be no single, defining musical characteristic that the Boston class of the mid-90s shared – though Converge guitarist Kurt Ballou produced or mixed many of its early releases. Capturing the eclecticism of the scene, he produced everything from the early metalcore of Cave In's *Until Your Heart Stops*, to the original screamo of Orchid's *Chaos Is Me*, and the post-hardcore of Garrison's *A Mile In Cold Water*.

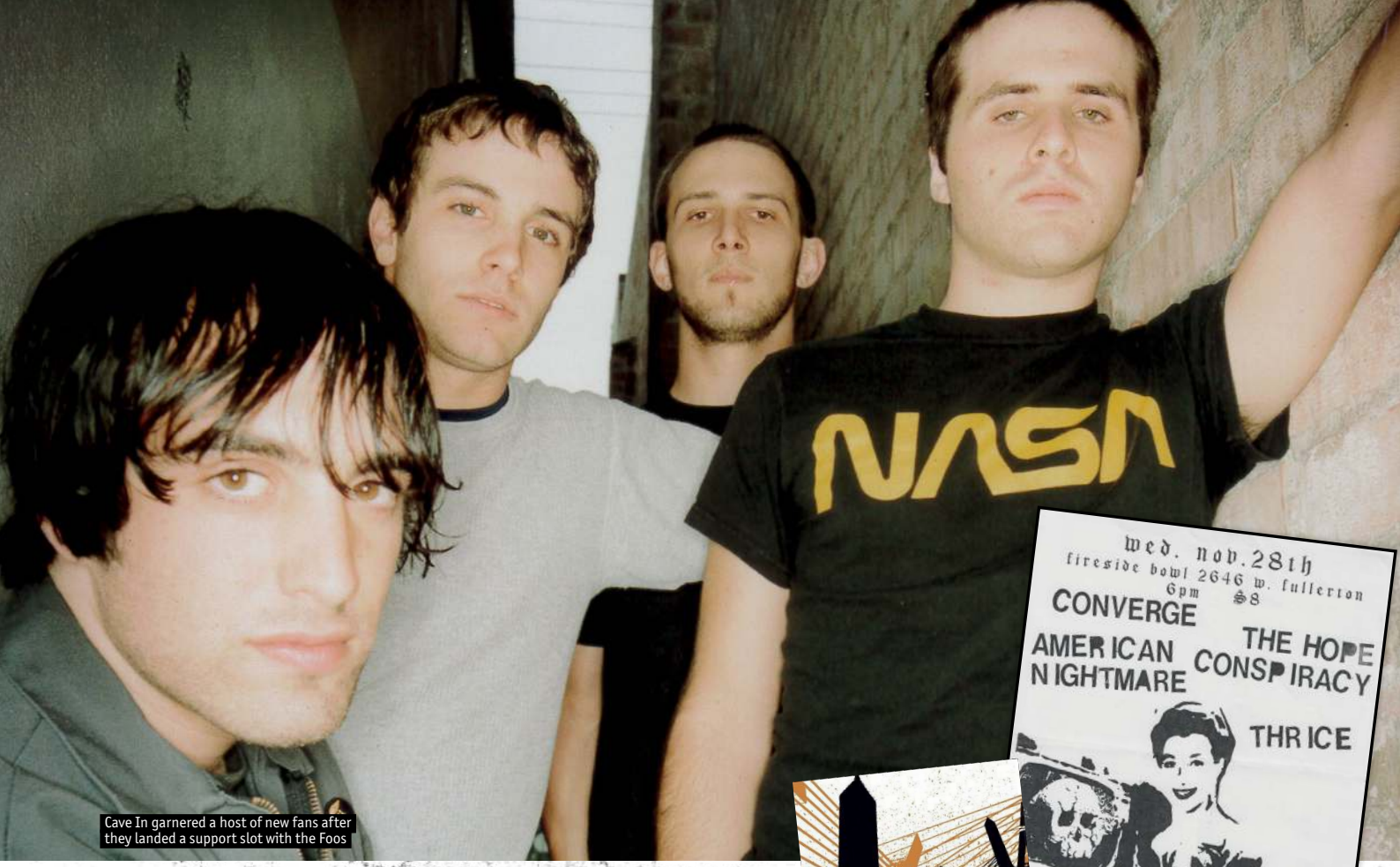
"Kurt took what everyone was doing and developed their sound," says The Hope Conspiracy frontman Kevin Baker. "We all were recorded by Kurt, so that's what we had in common, but we weren't all coming out sounding the same. We were coming out sounding like ourselves."

Instead the connection manifested itself in geography and a shared belief in what they were doing. "It was full of heart and sincerity," nods Wes. "And that's why the music crossed so many sounds. There was no room for opportunists. Boston policed itself in its realness."

This realness blossomed between 2000-2001, with endless underground classics changing the face of hardcore. There was the post-metal swell of Isis's debut, *Celestial*. Cave In morphed from atypical metalcore into the space prog-punk of second album *Jupiter*. They were followed by The Hope Conspiracy's *Cold Blue*, American Nightmare's *Background Music*, Bane's *Give Blood* and, most







Cave In garnered a host of new fans after they landed a support slot with the Foos

pertinently of all, Converge's *Jane Doe* – the high watermark of the Boston scene. Suddenly, young bands everywhere were ditching nu metal or pop-punk and turning hardcore.

"It became clear through running the label and seeing the increase in sales, there was this larger impact happening," says Aaron. "The records were just being sold to larger distros, chain stores and going overseas. We saw bands like [Kansas City's] Coalesce and [Nashville's] Today Is The Day, or a band like Knut from Switzerland, incorporating odd time signatures and noise rock influences. It was a lot more obtuse than 4/4 chugga-chugga hardcore. It all was collectively working toward opening the mind of audiences that needed to have this stuff portrayed in a lot of different ways before they could wholeheartedly embrace it."

"THE MAJOR LABELS RUINED THE WORD 'METALCORE'"

BOSTON HARDCORE'S INFLUENCE SAW A MORE COMMERCIAL STYLE DOMINATE THE METAL SCENE

With the underground smitten, it was inevitable the music industry would try and tap into this new and unusual music, and the majors began to circle. Cave In were signed by Capitol Records, and catapulted toward the mainstream.

"The whirlwind of having major label interest was a trip in itself," Stephen says. "That took up much of our time and energy. We toured with the Foo Fighters in 2002-2003. I can't tell you how many people I've met, from the UK in particular, who said their introduction to Cave In was via the Foo Fighters. How rad is that! It seems similar to what Nirvana did for so many of their friends and musical peers."

Ironically, though, as this new wave of Boston hardcore began to capture imaginations across the globe, its most recognisable stars were still waiting in the wings.

"Killswitch Engage, Shadows Fall and Unearth, that commercial metalcore scene, was happening organically," Jacob says. "It was pretty removed from us, but they were our peers so we knew the guys. I remember sitting at a Converge and Overcast show that I booked with Mike [D'Antonio, formerly bassist of Overcast and then KSE], and him telling me he wanted to do something completely different. They found Jesse [Leach, frontman], and it worked out fucking awesome."

The path Converge and co had trodden paved the way for metalcore to prosper commercially, while bearing practically no hallmarks of where it came from. To some from the Boston scene, this was a step too far.

"Initially seeing bands like Killswitch Engage or Shadows Fall, with people like Brian Fair and Mike D'Antonio from Overcast in, gave me a lot of satisfaction," says Aaron. "But when MTV and major labels came and made 'metalcore' the word that you associate it with today, I found that quite distasteful. It seemed to be a lot of people who were attracted to the sound of the music, but who had no idea or understanding of the DIY principles of where that music came from."

But the Boston hardcore scene left a trail of bands who followed their own creative vision, and many of its players are still experimenting with new sounds today. Be it the dark, synth-pop of Wes's Cold Cave, the discordant sludge of Aaron's Sumac, Jacob's solo, experimental Wear Your Wounds album, or the continuing brilliance of Converge – particularly their ambient *Blood Moon* project. Meanwhile, Stephen Brodsky's Mutoid Man and Kevin Baker's All Pigs Must Die continue pushing hardcore punk forwards.

They may not have enjoyed the commercial success of the metalcore bands of today, but their influence and impact is still felt throughout the underground, ringing out alongside the legacies of LA, New York and DC. ✠

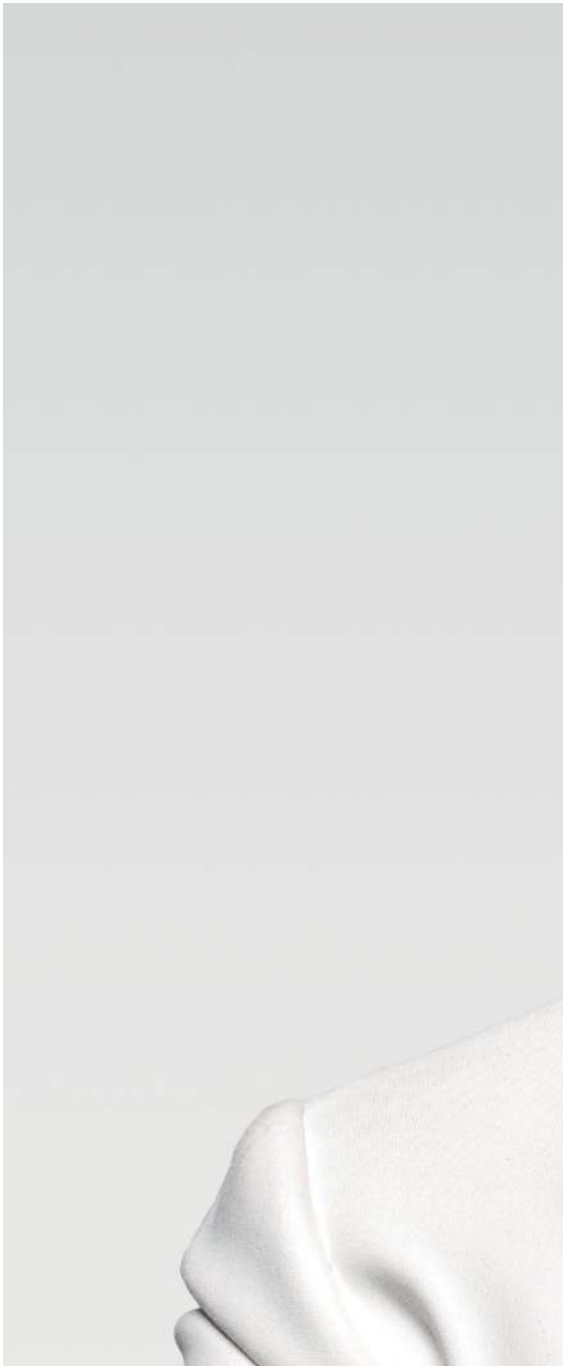
COLD CAVE'S *THE IDEA OF LOVE* IS OUT VIA HEARTWORM. WEAR YOUR WOUNDS' SELF-TITLED ALBUM IS OUT VIA DEATHWISH. MUTOID MAN'S *WAR MOANS* IS OUT VIA SARGENT HOUSE. CONVERGE ARE DUE TO RELEASE AN ALBUM THIS WINTER

MARILYN MANSON

Heaven Upside Down

LOMA VISTA/CAROLINE

The God Of Fuck brings back some old memories



THE PALE EMPEROR was roundly hailed as a success for Marilyn Manson. Between albums, he'd been following best bud Johnny Depp into acting, including a disturbing turn in US witch-hunting drama *Salem*. He wrote its bluesy theme song with composer Tyler Bates, and the two made an album that cast Manson in the role of a sleazy Southern preacher. For those who thought he'd been lost in the wilderness since *Holy Wood*, this was him finding a path out. For those who had always loved him, it was another evolutionary stage of his journey.

On 10th album *Heaven Upside Down*, you can't help but feel that Manson's glancing back to the past. Throwbacks to numerous stepping stones in Manson's career are given a punk feel – like the band have holed up in the Tate house again, or been rehearsing live for weeks to recapture the rawness of the *Antichrist Superstar* days. *Revelation #12* is straight out of the traps with all the mechanical, riffy twitches of yesteryear and a primal howl. *WE KNOW WHERE YOU FUCKING LIVE* has all the white-hot intensity of *Irresponsible Hate Anthem* or *The Reflecting God*. *SAY 10* – originally the title of the record – is a big, snarling anthem that's built for stages. *KILL4ME*, a film noir snapshot of a messy romance, is the closest relative to *The Pale Emperor*, along with the title track's bluesy swagger. The most satisfying marriage of styles is *Tattooed In Reverse* – opening with a punchy, *'So fuck your Bible and your belt'*, it's a no-fucks-given glam stomp with the most wickedly tongue-in-cheek pun on the record (*'I'm unstable,*

I'm not a show horse'), and an electro-goth dancefloor interlude.

If *The Pale Emperor* was banger after low-down banger, and predecessor *Born Villain* went back to basics, this one sits somewhere in between – still bearing Tyler's mark but with a nod to other eras. If there's a criticism, it's that the album loses some momentum after the climactic *SAY 10*, when it becomes more explicitly about romantic relationships. Harking back to his break-up albums, *Blood Honey* is an unashamedly anguished gothic ballad, while closer *Threats Of Romance* maintains a laidback, Bowie-esque, piano-led pace as it glories in emotional damage.

Despite the violent trailer for *SAY 10* hinting at some Trump-bashing, *Heaven Upside Down* is more like a roll call of Manson's favourite concerns: corruption, love, mythology and Christianity, relayed by an unbridled torrent of wordplay. Disappointingly, there's not enough here to cause another moral panic, though *JEU CRII* skates close to the edge of controversy with its eyerolling provocation – *'I write songs to fight and to fuck to / If you wanna fight then I'll fight you / If you wanna fuck I will fuck you / Make up your mind, or I'll make it up for you.'*

Ultimately, *Heaven Upside Down* is a solid album that shows the Double M can still do what he got famous doing: write biting, anti-establishment goth rock full of dark, playful imagery. People who came back for *The Pale Emperor* might lose interest in *Heaven Upside Down*, but fans who have followed him throughout will clutch this close to their black hearts.

7

FOR FANS OF: **Nine Inch Nails, Killing Joke, KMFDM**

ELEANOR GOODMAN

Marilyn Manson: he still writes songs to fight and to fuck to

THE MODERN MANSON

The post-golden age albums revisited

Eat Me, Drink Me

INTERSCOPE – 2007

The goth-pop album. When Manson's marriage to burlesque icon Dita Von Teese imploded, he went full rebound. The video for lead single *Heart-Shaped Glasses* was shot like a sex tape of himself and his new actress girlfriend, Rachel Evan Wood.

The High End Of Low

INTERSCOPE – 2009

Documenting the ups and downs of his relationships, the songs swerved from the vulnerable to the violent, with surprisingly straightforward – if indulgent – lyrics. Twiggy returned to the band, bringing the album's distinctive low end.

Born Villain

COOKING VINYL – 2012

Addressing the question of whether someone's born a villain or made one, Manson's eighth record encompassed an impressive range of styles, from the stompy to the subdued, while mixing high literary and film references to intoxicating effect.

The Pale Emperor

HELL, ETC.– 2015

With the title nodding to David Bowie, Marilyn reinvented himself again with the help of composer Tyler Bates, creating a collection of slick, sexy, Southern songs with broad appeal. As close to mainstream as the God Of Fuck swims.

Marilyn Manson

| VOCALS |

THE PALE EMPEROR WAS A VERY WELL-RECEIVED CHANGE IN PACE FOR YOU.

"When Tyler [Bates, co-writer] and I met and we made that record, we finished it and we were really proud of it – and we're still proud of it – and he said, 'That's just the opening act. Wait for the next record.'"

WAS THERE THE TEMPTATION TO REPEAT THE FORMULA FOR _HEAVEN UPSIDE DOWN_?

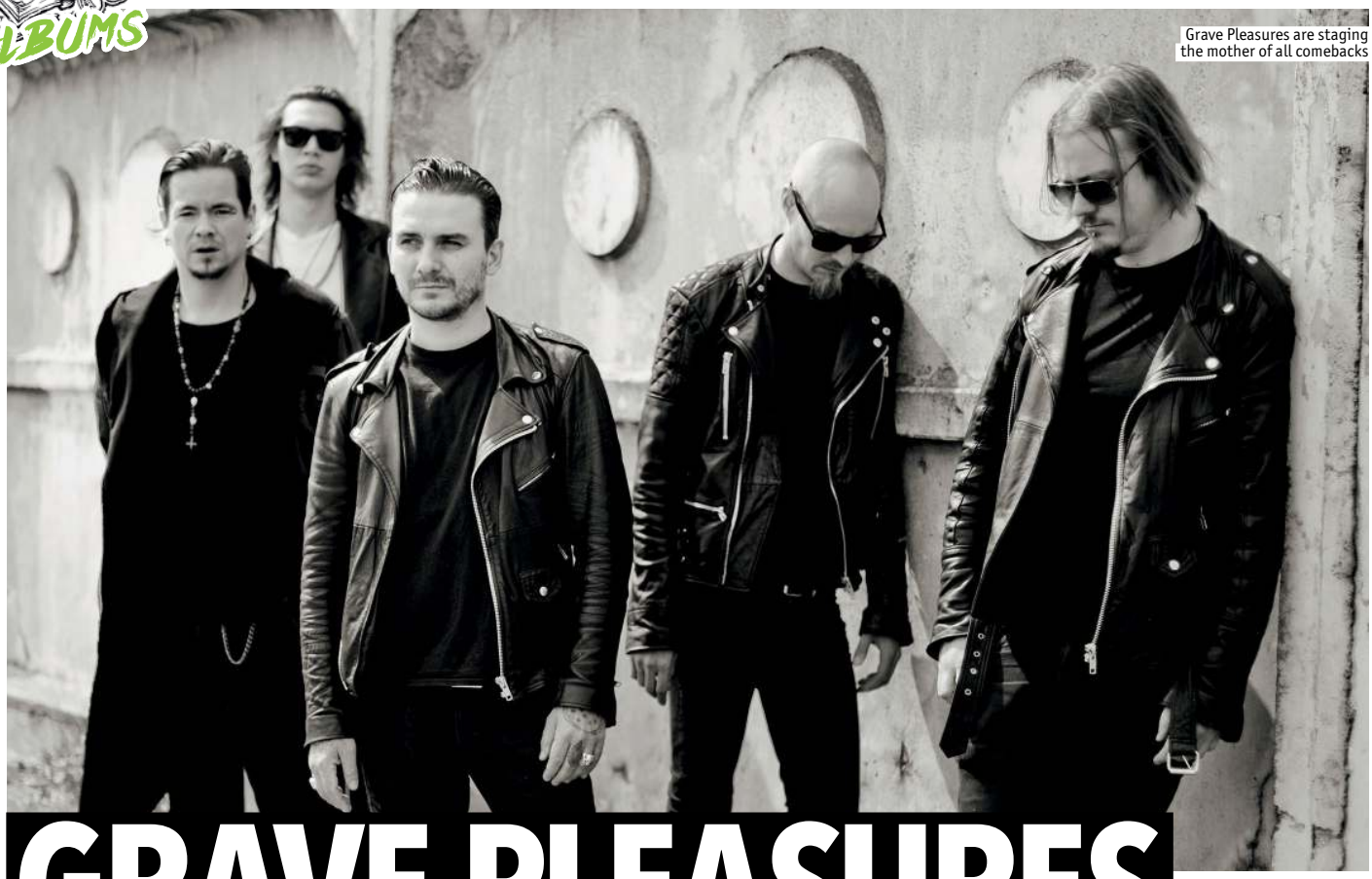
"We wanted to make a record that was completely… not necessarily what *people* didn't expect, but what *we* didn't expect."

WHY DID YOU ORIGINALLY SAY THIS WAS GOING TO BE OUT ON VALENTINE'S DAY AND WHAT CHANGED THERE? AFTER ALL, IT'S NEARLY HALLOWEEN!

"Tyler and I sat next to each other, the record was finished, but I felt like I didn't tell the whole story of the record. And we said, 'What is the song that you would get some girl to fuck you to in high school?' And we both simultaneously said: 'The Cure! *Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me.*' I said, 'I want a song like that.' He sent me a mix of this beat, and I put it on in my house, and it was just *pulsating*. It has this binaural frequency that really fucks with your head, it's hypnotising. And now, that song, *Heaven Upside Down*, and also *Saturnalia*, those songs have become the centre of the story of the record."

THE ALBUM WAS ORIGINALLY GOING TO BE CALLED 'SAY 10'. WHY DID YOU CHANGE IT?

"Yeah, I thought originally that 'Say 10' was very clever, but it's not as expansive or as defining as *Heaven Upside Down*. People say, 'Oh, what's *Heaven Upside Down*?' You decide. It doesn't have to be anything specific."



Grave Pleasures are staging the mother of all comebacks

GRAVE PLEASURES

Motherblood

SECRET TREES/CENTURY MEDIA

Apocalyptic party starters return to their glorious ground zero

METALHEADS ARE A surprisingly fragile lot. When Grave Pleasures released their debut album, *Dreamcrash*, in 2015, a huge number of people thought it was fucking great. Another bunch of people were still too upset about the demise of the band's revered earlier incarnation, Beastmilk, to contemplate embracing a new musical dawn with similar enthusiasm. Beastmilk *were* phenomenal, of course, and had a much better name. As a result, when *Dreamcrash* didn't quite hit the same ecstatic post-punk heights as 2013's widely adored *Climax*, tears were shed and death knells were prematurely sounded.

The good news is that Beastmilk diehards can now stop boo-hooing into their Bauhaus box sets. Put simply, the second Grave Pleasures album is much, *much* better than the first and proves beyond doubt that the absence of two fifths of that original line-up was not the reason *Dreamcrash* received such a mixed response.

The key to this return to blazing top form is twofold: firstly, these are simply much better songs than anything found on *Motherblood*'s predecessor; secondly, and most importantly, that glorious, magical rush of dark sexual abandon that made *Climax* such an addictive thrillride is back in vast, bewildering quantities. That much is obvious a few seconds into tooth-rattling opener *Infatuation Overkill*. To some degree, Grave

Pleasures do still sound like a turbocharged, metal-tinged Joy Division, but thanks in part to Mat McNerney's tremulous bellow and a razor-sharp refrain, they now sound far more like, erm, a turbocharged Beastmilk.

Both *Doomsday Rainbows* – quite possibly the most goth song title of all time – and the explosive, instantly memorable *Be My Hiroshima* sound like future classics, their infectious momentum, suffocating barrage of guitars and giant, grimly inspirational choruses hitting the mark with lethal accuracy. For students of the post-punk era, *Falling For An Atom Bomb* sounds like an outtake from agit-rock legends Gang Of Four's 1981 album, *Solid Gold*. For everyone else, though, it's another killer song for broken-hearted misanthropes with a swivel-hipped groove that just won't quit. Even more irresistible is *Atomic Christ*, which begins with some unhinged psychedelic poetry before erupting into the mother of all existential hoedowns. Plummeting into oblivion's drooling maw has never sounded more appealing. Both *Deadenders* and *Haunted Afterlife* are possessed with the malevolent, twanging spirit of psychobilly, albeit filtered through a prism of snarling psychodrama, and both will make you want to run straight through a brick wall. *Motherblood* is that kind of record. Even the closing song *There Are Powers At Work In This World*, which spitefully robs this party of a hopeful conclusion, gets the balance between mad-eyed exhilaration and troubled emotional depths exactly right.

If there *is* a downside to this unequivocal triumph, it's that there isn't a great deal of variety on offer here, but then when you can make people feel like they've been plugged into the mains, why would you do anything else? Grave Pleasures do it 11 times on *Motherblood* and that's no kind of anti-climax.

9

FOR FANS OF: Killing Joke, Ghost, HIM

DOM LAWSON

ALTER BRIDGE
Live At The 02 Arena + Rarities

NAPALM

High-rising rockers in need of some live rough edges

There's a good reason why Alter Bridge are regularly touted as future festival headliners; they're an immaculately precise and consistent live act. This set, taken from their triumphant 02 Arena show in London last December, is proof of not only how expertly they command the live environment, but what a stellar setlist they've put together over the course of their five albums. Alongside the entire gig is a disc of rare material, including the superb, never-before-released Soundgarden-esque *Cruel Sun*. If you're a fan it's all you could ever want, but for all the professionalism there's the sneaking suspicion that this lacks the off-the-cuff, rough'n'ready charm that made classic live albums like *Live And Dangerous* or *No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith* such essential purchases. Impressive, but your record collection is complete without it. **6**

FOR FANS OF: Soundgarden, Stone Sour, Halestorm

STEPHEN HILL

THE CONTORTIONIST
Clairvoyant

LONGBRANCH/SPV

Former tech-metallers set sail for new, atmospheric territories

These US prog adventurers began straying ever further from their tech-metal lineage with the release of 2014's *Language*, but the sextet have never shied from favouring creativity over expectation. Effortless grace and sonic guts collide over the course of this nine-track journey, as brooding atmospherics give way to jarring time signatures underpinned by subtle syncopation. Taking cues from A Perfect Circle and the textured melodicism of Sigur Rós, the result is an irresistible record with six individuals displaying all their musical chops. The rich yet simplistic beauty of *Reimagined* complements the riff-centred intricacies of the title track, while the expansive *Relapse* is bolstered by Michael Lessard's hypnotic, ethereal vocals. No need for crystal balls here; this kind of fearless artistic endeavour speaks for itself – as well as the future of the band. **8**

FOR FANS OF: A Perfect Circle, Periphery, Tesseract

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

ALICE COOPER
Paranormal

EARMUSIC

Shock rock icon sets new standards for himself

Never one to settle back and take things comfortably, Alice Cooper has really stretched himself on *Paranormal*, one of his best albums. With producer Bob Ezrin taking a firm grip on the style, what we get is dynamic, thrusting, melodic and thankfully just a little on the edge. Alice has pulled in pals such as ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons, Roger Glover of Deep Purple and U2's Larry Mullen to help him out. But the celebrity presence is not what matters. What shines through is the perverse, scary prism through which the man himself always views life. *Dynamite Road* has a rock'n'roll encounter with Satan and *Fireball* is about the end of the world – done in the Cooper vernacular. He even gets the original Alice Cooper Band back together for a couple of stompers, one of which – *Genuine American Girl* – tackles transgender issues. A fine addition to the Cooper canon. **8**

FOR FANS OF: Ghost, Mötley Crüe, The Darkness

MALCOLM DOME

CRIPPER
Follow Me: Kill!

METAL BLADE

German thrashers look closer to home for inspiration

Since their 2008 debut, *Freak Inside*, Germany's Cripper have been unafraid to collide thrash with blackened death, with the compass pointing firmly towards chuggy old-school hooks. Back then it was all about stripping out Metallica riffs, and even on 2014's *Hyëna*, the opening salvo did a good job of ripping off *Blackened*, but here it's all about Soulfly and thrash of the 80s German variety. To their credit, Cripper have got this genre pegged, and their newest drop is a groovy beast. *'Resurrect, resuscitate'* snarls Britta Görtz on *Into The Fire*, which has live fave scrawled all over it. *Pretty Young Thing* loads up Destruction's bullet belts ready to cause carnage in the moshpit and *Shoot Or Get Shot* finds its quickfire tentacles reaching for the scattergun. If you're going to thrash, better do it properly. And Cripper damn well do. **7**

FOR FANS OF: Destruction, Soulfly, Onslaught

HOLLY WRIGHT

36 Crazyfists find light in the darkness

36 CRAZYFISTS
Lanterns

SPINEFARM

Alaska's melodic metallers continue to explore their own path

OCCUPYING A TERRITORY between jarring metalcore, nu metal's groove and the anthemic charge of post-hardcore, Alaska's finest have sown frustration amongst their fans, having been overlooked and undervalued for so long. Indeed, 36 Crazyfists' capacity to elicit hope and joy from hardship is embedded in every release, with 2015's comeback, *Time And Trauma*, the last addition to a muscular discography. The album was preceded by a period of personal upheaval for the band and it's again the case for eighth effort *Lanterns*. Blistering opener *Death Eater* finds Brock Lindow's vocals thrashing out in every direction, while raw pain is etched into *Better To Burn* and the juggernaut riff of *Sleepsick*. With harsh production creating an almost uncomfortable atmosphere, *Lanterns* lacks the immediacy of previous efforts and results in a difficult listen at times. But with the angular *Bandage For Promise* and vulnerable *Dark Corners*, the band's evolution is as challenging as it is cathartic. The mutating *Old Gold* and *Sea And Smoke*'s frantic clawing towards the surface display a bravery to explore new ports, while on *Wars To Walk Away From* and the confrontational *Below The Graves*, Steve Holt's simplistic melodies set up the mass sing-along choruses 36CF have made their bread and butter. The Alaskans' chance to conquer the globe may have passed, but *Lanterns* shows they'll never stop fighting, no matter what's thrown their way. **7**

FOR FANS OF: Killswitch Engage, Deftones, While She Sleeps

ADAM REES

THIS MONTH IN METAL *ALBUM MONOLITHS FROM THE VAULT*

SOUNDGARDEN *Badmotorfinger*

A&M *OCTOBER 1991*

"If Led Zeppelin reformed right now and had an obsession with something grungy, this is what they'd sound like," began *Metal Hammer*'s review of the third album from Soundgarden. To be quite honest, neither of those options was particularly likely back in 1991, but our man James Sherry certainly captured the essence of *Badmotorfinger* in a 4/5 critique that also noted: "It's incredible that a band which heralds a new movement in metal could have their sound set so far in the past." Some people still say that the much-missed Chris Cornell (RIP) and company never bettered the utter game-changing brilliance of *Rusty Cage*, *Outshined*, *Jesus Christ Pose* and all the rest of this truly outstanding record.

August Burns Red: barnstorming a ton of ideas

AUGUST BURNS RED

Phantom Anthem

FEARLESS

Ever-evolving US metalcore mob stay ahead of the pack

NOW ON THEIR eighth record, these Pennsylvania stalwarts have carved out a fine niche for themselves in the increasingly cramped cattle pen that is the modern metalcore scene. Initially dismissed by some as MySpace-spawened, fringe-bedecked chancers, August Burns Red have evolved into a much more serious proposition, even earning a Grammy nomination (in spite of their ongoing flirtation with the abysmal *Punk Goes Pop* compilation series). These days there are two factors that mark ABR out from so many of their peers: musical chops, and a sense of fun. Despite the template set out by bands like Killswitch Engage and Atreyu, too many contemporary metalcore bands are happy to plod away with lumpen riffs and half-baked breakdowns. *Phantom Anthem*, on the other hand, comes roaring off the blocks with hyperactive shredding. And so honed is the band's sense of melodrama that just about every song sounds like it could be an album opener or closer. *The Frost*, in particular, carries a sense of occasion that's frankly arrogant coming from an album's third track. The pace isn't sustained, however, and *Phantom Anthem* undeniably outstays its welcome, but ABR deserve credit for fitting more ideas into some songs than many bands spread across an entire album – even if they don't always land. The chillwave-inspired breakdown on closer *Carbon Copy*, for example, is infinitely more interesting than the half-baked synths you'll hear bolted onto so many electronicore albums this year. In a scene so stacked with stagnant imaginations, just being interesting is almost as good as innovation. Almost.

6

FOR FANS OF: **Atreyu, A Day To Remember, Parkway Drive**

ROB BARBOUR

DARK WATERS END

Submersion

SELF-RELEASED

Deviant death-prog from the pits of Pennsylvania

There was a time when 'progressive death metal' was shorthand for 'sounds quite a lot like Opeth circa *Blackwater Park*'. These days, the tag could mean one of countless different things and while Dark Waters End clearly draw inspiration from some familiar sources, the imperious Swedes among them, the material on their debut amounts to a commendably abstruse sonic square peg. Clearly deeply immersed in death metal's past and present but in no way restricted by it, the likes of *Congenital Vice* and *Rat King* deftly blend pinpoint brutality with perverse arrangements and a near-relentless slew of elegant embellishments. Gracefully veering from unapologetic bonehead deathcore to dizzyingly cerebral art rock reverie, often within the same song, Dark Waters End are arguably what happens when a generation raised on Candiria and Cannibal Corpse gets their radical shit together.

7

FOR FANS OF: **Candiria, Between The Buried & Me, Car Bomb**

DOM LAWSON

THE DITCH AND THE DELTA

Hives In Decline

PROSTHETIC

Dynamic noise/sludge with some familiar sources

The Ditch And The Delta's full-length debut, engineered by SubRosa's Andy Patterson, pitches noise-rock's rhythmic angularity against sludge's molten grooves to great effect. With its rolling riffs, and sharp lead work from Iceburn's Gentry Densley, the Red Fang-ed *Fuck On Asphalt* steals the show early on through its balance of musical heft and hooks. The title track burns like Neurosis's cleansing fire and *Till Body Quits* churns through mathcore's complexities yet maintains monster low-end. Elsewhere, the penultimate *Mud* bears its incisors like an Amphetamine Reptile release before shape-shifting into Botch's more expansive flashes. The only difficulty is that the resulting 'spot-the-inspiration' game can be distracting, and the Kelly/von Till vocal-purging is too approximated at times. But when you merge designs from some of the best acts in metal and do so cohesively, the potential for future individuality remains high.

7

FOR FANS OF: **Mastodon, Kylesa, Red Fang**

DEAN BROWN

DYSCARNATE

With All Their Might

UNIQUE LEADER

UK death metal pack-leaders present another show of force

Anointed as the all-conquering kings of UK death metal in these pages, globe-trotting trio Dyscarnate are destined to earn even more devotees to their cause with their thunderous second album. Taking themes of existential dread, human perception and strength of will as inspiration, *With All Their Might* is a consistently enjoyable offering that is heaving with hellacious riffs and powerful hooks. Opener *Of Mice And Mountains* starts proceedings with a proverbial bang and the pummelling track is unfathomably heavy. The muscular *Iron Strengthens Iron* is another highlight thanks to a mountainous groove, as is the epic *Nothing Seems Right*, which is littered with arresting time changes. Best of all is *Backbreaker*. Feral, ferocious and as mean as the comments section on a fan fiction forum, the catchy effort could end up being a crossover hit in the making.

8

FOR FANS OF: **Suffocation, Raging Speedhorn, Trigger The Bloodshed**

EDWIN McFEE

SMALL MERCIES

THE NEW BLOOD

BLIND HAZE

The Bastard

APF

This trio have no pretence to subtlety whatsoever. They are unashamedly high-volume dirty rock'n'rollers. Taking their cue from Motörhead and very early Tank, Blind Haze rip up songs like *Ain't Gonna Last*. A fierce blast. **[6]**

MALCOLM DOME

CROSSFAITH

Freedom EP

UNFD

On this latest EP, tracks *Diavolos* and *Rockstar Steady* prove decent additions to Crossfaith's already potent rave-metal arsenal. However *Freedom*, which features Enter Shikari's Rou Reynolds, is the highlight and an absolute belter of a tune. **[7]**

DANNII LEIVERS

GRAVEMIND

The Deathgate

SELF-RELEASED

You can blame Thy Art Is Murder for the recent deluge of deathcore reaching our ears from Down Under. Gravemind's assault is brutal and pushes the right beatdown buttons, but it lacks depth, leaving you somewhat unfulfilled. **[6]**

LUKE MORTON

HELPLESS
Debt

HOLY ROAR

Ear-damaging diatribes from the darkest corners of Devon

Some music makes you want to dance. Some music makes you want to cry. But some music makes you want to ram your skull through a thousand brick walls. In a good way. Plymouth's powerviolence peddlers have lined up a debut album so putrid and barbaric that serious bodily harm to the brain and face seems like the only logical response. The relentless destruction is juxtaposed with a pervasive feeling of desolation and emptiness, like the concepts of aggression and sorrow are dancing in the flickering light of the world burning around them. From front to back *Debt* is drowning in darkness, surviving only on brutality, with just one track breaking the three-minute mark. In between the roaring vocals and battering drums, there are nuances finding new ways to cause pain. Just like the best torture masters, there's no point in just having one way of removing teeth. **8**

FOR FANS OF: Nails, Full Of Hell, Code Orange

LUKE MORTON

JOSH TODD & THE CONFLICT
Year Of The Tiger

CENTURY MEDIA

Buckcherry frontman brings out his most brazen side

After last year's hilariously woeful Spraygun War album, the bar is set stupendously low when it come to new music with members of Buckcherry involved. Whether that bar is what makes Josh Todd & The Conflict so surprisingly enjoyable, or it's the fact that the 'Cherry frontman is in more familiar hard rock territory here, is unclear, but even though *Year Of The Tiger* is as bombastic and daft as you would expect, it's undeniably entertaining. *Good Enough* is as cheesy a ballad as you'll hear, but suckers leech-like on to your brain on after one listen, and the rollicking *Fucked Up* might be mad as a lorry but it has an undeniable, bug-eyed charm. If you like your music over the top, absurd and unapologetic then you'll love this. Serious musos might want to start running away now. **6**

FOR FANS OF: Guns N' Roses, Steel Panther, Sebastian Bach

STEPHEN HILL

KUBLAI KHAN
Nomad

RISE

Self-reliant, metallic hardcore with a socially conscious kick

This Texas metalcore quartet formed in 2009 with a strong DIY ethic. They designed their own merchandise, self-released their debut EP, and toured for some time before being signed to Artery and Rise Records. Matthew Honeycutt is a fierce frontman determined to write meaningful lyrics and unafraid to address racism, human rights, depression and beyond. Completed by guitarist and vocalist Nolan Ashley, bassist Eric English and drummer Isaac Lamb, the band deliver a low, crushing brand of metalcore sealed in a hardcore coating that brings the power of early Hatebreed to mind. Nomad shows their grippingly heavy sound growing more confident and rounded and their songwriting more distinctive. Crashing along with monstrous riffs, fierce blastbeats, and tough vocals, there's rarely an expected breakdown to be found and both *Belligerent* and *No Kin* will prove wildly pit-worthy. **7**

FOR FANS OF: The Acacia Strain, Emmure, Gideon

NIK YOUNG

MAHARAJA
Kali Yuga

SELF-RELEASED

Dayton, Ohio stoner rockers get (s)toked for the endtimes

There's a moment in opener *Blood Moon* where one of the vocalists sounds like he's about to swallow his own throat by way of some horrible, self-induced osmosis. The menace crawls back again on *Free Choice*, a frantic semi-groove of muddy riffs and sweat-spraying cymbal crashes, switching up Maharaja's Mastodon-y bellow with blood-curdling screams that demand a full double-handed grip on the mic. That's the bonus in having two dudes who can attack from both sides of the vocal trench. *Kali Yuga* will be familiar to Matt Pike devotees, doing that thing where the bass lands like a bulldozer but the guitars have had a tank full of caffeine. *Ouroboros* goes full sludge, ploughing pitch-black depths, but the Red Fang tempo switch on *Blaq Magiq Carpet Ride*, Eric Bluebaum's closest thing to singing, is the thrill seeker's go-to track. **7**

FOR FANS OF: High On Fire, Red Fang, Conan

HOLLY WRIGHT

ALBUM THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

NATE BERGMAN
Lionize

THE BEATLES
Abbey Road

"*Abbey Road* was the first time I had heard a band in depth really get heavy and strange on an album. It's beautiful and dark and weird. I keep going back to *I Want You (She's So Heavy)* as some of the first riffs were the first that really moved me."

The Bronx: back on (f)ire

THE BRONX
V

COOKING VINYL/ATO

West coast punk rockers get their attack back on track

WHILE ANYONE WHO found 2013's fourth Bronx album disappointing could be accused of being overly stern in their marking, it's undeniable that it was the least impressive member of a discography that had failed to put a foot wrong up until that point. Luckily for us, those sky-high standards are met once again on their fifth full-length. If the previous record suffered a little from a slightly cleaner production, something that doesn't suit The Bronx's high-octane musical speedball of chaos and energy, then the opening rasp of Joby J Ford and Ken Horne's guitars belching from the speakers on *Night Drop At The Glue Factory* is a statement to show that they same mistakes won't be happening again. The sleazy gutter punk of second track *Stranger Danger* is even better, with Matt Caughthran screaming about the Summer of Sam over the filthiest Stooges impersonation you'll hear this year. But don't pigeonhole The Bronx as just a shit-kicking gang of punk rock reprobates – there is far more to *V* than just 0-60 reckless abandon. The wah-wah power pop of *Two Birds* through to the anthemic alt-rock of *Chordless Kids* show just how accomplished and varied a group of musicians The Bronx can be. Ultimately, though, they're at their very best when they are channelling the spirit of the early punk nihilism of Black Flag and the rest of their 80s hardcore brethren, and songs like the aptly named *Sore Throat* is 183 seconds that perfectly encapsulates the appeal and longevity of this band. It's one of life's great mysteries why this band aren't one of the biggest names in the world of punk rock, and after five records with hardly a dip in quality in 15 years together, it looks doubtful whether it will ever happen for The Bronx at this point in their career. Regardless, this is yet another stellar record from one of modern punk rock's truly great outfits, and if you'd slept on them before then *V* should be the moment where you wake up and give them their well-deserved dues. **8**

FOR FANS OF: Black Flag, The Stooges, Gallows

STEPHEN HILL

Dani's back, preying on your soul

CRADLE OF FILTH

Cryptoriana – The Seductiveness Of Decay

NUCLEAR BLAST

Cradle silence their critics with a filthy masterpiece

CHOMPING AT THE bat as they crawl from the crypt once more, Suffolk's filthiest continue their renaissance in vulgaris with album number 12. Embellishing extreme metal checkpoints from Cradle's career with Victorian mysticism, *Cryptoriana*... embodies the trope, 'It's like the early stuff, but new, too'. Building further on *Hammer Of The Witches*' old-school, orchestrally lavish approach from 2015, this record is a perfectly paced example of what people love(d) about the band. Dani Filth's vocal tract bungee jumps as usual, his bollock-squeezing high screams riposting bestial belches and raspy narration. A yearning lyrical tide rides atop *Wester Vespertine*'s chord progression, reaffirming Dani's status as a modern-day Byron with a sore throat. But in contrast to what detractors would have you believe, this isn't Dani & The Filths. Cradle's latest line-up, stable for three years now, have forged their firmest musical spine since *Midian*. The return to twin lead guitar is still improving, the title track's galloping riff bastardising vintage Iron Maiden. *Achingly Beautiful*'s key-laden thrash seems a charming throwback to 1994's *A Crescendo Of Passion Bleeding*, but it's done with such expertise, it's never laboured nor derivative. Cradle know people think their best days are behind them, so *Death And The Maiden*'s live choirs, its spindly solos and Lindsay Schoolcraft's magisterial vocals are the most triumphant middle fingers this side of the grave. *Cryptoriana*... isn't some black metal reinvention – it's just another incredible offering from one of extreme music's most unique entities, starring the line-up Cradle will arguably be remembered for when they're long gone, souls uploaded to the cloud.

8

FOR FANS OF: **Mercyful Fate, Iron Maiden, Carach Angren**

ALEC CHILLINGWORTH

MASTIFF

Bork

APF

Northern miserablists play fast and loose with the sludge template

Hailing from Hull, Mastiff are just as fond of bottom-of-the-bottle misery and as they are drinks-on-the-landlord conviviality. Describing themselves as "a miserable band from a miserable town" cherishing "volume over talent", and having songs like *Full On Skullet* and *Slow Motion Death Roll* in their discography are a few examples of their sly, curmudgeonly grumpiness. The total absence of good times and cheer continue on *Bork*, a mini-album that drenches scuzzy guitar tones in bongwater and embraces despondency from both America's south and the UK's grey, grim north. Mastiff's edge comes with their refusal to stick to the same tar-like tempos so many stoner/sludge bands adhere to. When the pace is picked up during *Nil By Mouth* and the mid-section of *Everything Equals Death*, it truly feels like you're being bowled over by a force of nature, not being slow-burned to a crisp.

7

FOR FANS OF: **Crowbar, Buzzov.en, Eyehategod**

CONNIE GORDON

MONOLORD

Rust

RIDING EASY

Accessible doom/fuzz with a slight whiff of teen spirit

"Some refer to them as 'the Nirvana of doom,'" says the accompanying bumph to Swedish doom trio Monolord's third full-length. Who those 'some' are is a mystery, but calling someone the Nirvana of anything isn't a recommended topic of polite conversation. You can see what they mean, though. On the surface, the Swedes' riff-built wall of fuzz is more obviously indebted to slow swagger of the likes of Saint Vitus, Pentagram or, during the slumbering, string-augmented melancholy of *Wormland* in particular, the occult strains of Candlemass. Like the Seattle grunge legends, however, the trio know how to write a memorable hook, crafting here six tracks of lumbering doom that are hugely accessible without having sacrificed their crushing heaviness – the ethereal yet pulverising epic *Forgotten Lands* being the zenith of this approach.

7

FOR FANS OF: **Saint Vitus, Nirvana, The Cosmic Dead**

TOBY COOK

MOTÖRHEAD

Under Cöver

MOTÖRHEAD MUSIC

Heavy metal's greatest heroes pay tribute to the classics

Forget any cynicism you may have about this being a cash-in because the music here is simply irresistible. It takes in the period from 1992-2015, picking out songs closely associated with other artists, but here given a Lemmy-style enthusiastic rock'n'roll sheen. From Ozzy Osbourne's *Hellraiser*, which was actually co-written with Lemmy, through to the Sex Pistols' *God Save The Queen*, onward to Judas Priest's classic *Breaking The Law* and Twisted Sister's *Shoot 'Em Down*, plus Metallica's *Whiplash*, every cover version works so well they seem to belong to Motörhead. Saxon's Biff Byford joins the band for a strong run-through of Rainbow's *Starstruck*, but the real gem here is a previously unreleased version of David Bowie's *Heroes*. Quite why this been allowed to gather dust on the shelf since being recorded in 2015 is puzzling; it pays respect to the originals, yet fits seamlessly into the band's style. A cracking collection.

8

FOR FANS OF: **Metallica, Twisted Sister, Volbeat**

MALCOLM DOME

SMALL MERCIES

THE NEW BLOOD

MADE OF TEETH

Made Of Teeth

RED SUN SOUNDS

"South Wales mountain men" Made Of Teeth make a hideously uppity and bleak noise. It's the sort of din that can crack the concrete sarcophagus encasing a collision between Fudge Tunnel and AmRep's catalogue but still make you smile. **[8]**

CONNIE GORDON

PROTOSEQUENCE

Biophagous

SELF-RELEASED

Biophagous comprises four neat chunks of post-djent tech-death that hit the spot without presenting any real challenge to erudite ears. This Canadian crew's second EP sounds like a bold step towards somewhere much more exciting. **[6]**

DOM LAWSON

ZEBEDY

Set The Pace

SELF-RELEASED

Hovering between more modern, post-hardcore stylings and a metronomic, Tool-inflected expansiveness, this North Wales four-piece are a welcome mutation from the template, but there's further potential here waiting to be fully realised. **[6]**

JONATHAN SELZER

NECK OF THE WOODS
The Passenger
BASICK

Vancouver technicians stir up the prog cauldron

Having grown up with the persistent clank'n'whirr of Devin Townsend's constant creativity in their British Columbian ears, this quintet were never going to approach DM in a straightforward manner. Admittedly, there are numerous moments here that display their influences boldly and without apology; opener *Bottom Feeder* boasts a handful of flagrant Opeth-isms and *Nailbiter* hedges its bets between Bergen and Gothenburg, with a dash of Novembers Doom-like blood'n' thunder thrown in. For the most part, however, Neck Of The Woods are too eclectic and astute to be easily labelled. Whether it's *White Coats'* deranged opening riff, *You'll Always Look The Same To Me*'s mid-song mellow detour or epic closer *Before I Rest*'s post-djent twinkling and hair-raising crescendos, this is an assured slab of stylish and progressive extremity from an obscenely talented band with shitloads of potential. **7**

FOR FANS OF: Opeth, Enslaved, Oceans Of Slumber

DOM LAWSON

THE NECROMANCERS
Servants Of The Salem Girl
RIPPLE MUSIC

Gallic proto-metallers observe the Sabbath a little too closely

Every band entering the sludgy netherworld of proto-metal revivalism must ask themselves this: just how much do we want to sound like Sabbath? Bands like Clutch and Orange Goblin have used the trademark Iommi sound as a reference point from which newer sounds would organically evolve. Then there are bands like The Necromancers, whose occult-influenced debut so reverentially evokes the doomy space rock paranoia of Sabbath that you could be forgiven for mistaking this album as an authentic relic of the 70s. *Necromancers* and *Lucifer's Kin* showcase an impressive ability to craft bludgeoning stoner rock riffs while *Grand Orbiter* simmers with the bad-trip psychedelia and shadowy atmospherics of proto-metal's first wave. But by faithfully recreating that sound, they fail to establish a distinct identity and *Servants Of The Salem Girl* sounds like a whole lot of stuff you've heard before. **5**

FOR FANS OF: Black Sabbath, Uncle Acid, Orange Goblin

JOE DALY

NOSTOC
Ævum
SELF-RELEASED

Progressive Costa Ricans go exploring without a map

With musicians whose influences seem to stretch across metal's broad spectrum and a vocalist who sounds like a death metal jukebox, these Costa Rican upstarts have a point to prove, and a seemingly limitless space in which to explore. Ultimately these seven tracks are exercises in discovering new environments and sounds rather than constructing anything concrete, though after repeated listens the tech-death symphonies begin to materialise. *Transmute* refuses to be contained as it shifts from belligerent riffing and guttural vocals to spacey leads and restrained fretwork, concluding with the lush sweeping textures Enslaved have made their own. *The Anamnesic Voyage* (sic) briefly escapes the barrage of foul extremity for expressive guitar work and delicate picking, and depending on your constitution, following the avalanche of riffs and twists of 11-minute closer *Delirium* you'll either be enthralled by the experience or exhausted. **6**

FOR FANS OF: Ne Obliviscaris, BTBAM, Black Crown Initiate

ADAM REES

PENTAKILL
II: Grasp Of The Undying
RIOT GAMES

Stupendously popular heavy metal avatars flesh out their vision

Pentakill are a virtual band comprised of quirky sci-fi characters from the *League Of Legends* universe. Despite 2014's *Smite And Ignite* proving half-baked, *…Legends* fans sent it into the Billboard Top 40 and showered them with millions of Spotify and YouTube hits. Bolstered by that record's rampant success, gaming titan Riot Games summoned their in-house composers and a roster of guests including Masterplan vocalist Jørn Lande, Battle Beast singer Noora Louhimo and drummer Tommy Lee. *II…* imbues hooky arena rock grandeur with generous doses of symphonic and power metal, igniting full-throttle belters like *Rapid Firecannon* and *Mortal Reminder*. There's plenty of thrash, prog and even pop. Although largely formulaic, the fist-pumping riffs and powerhouse vocals unleash a propulsive sense of urgency. It's exceedingly well-crafted and fun as hell. **7**

FOR FANS OF: Devin Townsend Project, Lacuna Coil, Dethklok

JOE DALY

LAST ALBUM BOUGHT

BASSEM DEAIBESS
Blaakyum

HAVOK
Conformicide

"I bought this album right after I watched these guys at the Underworld this April. They were incredible live but would they deliver on album? Yes, they do. Crushing riffs, so retro yet so fresh, Havok are what Metallica should have become. They are the new masters of thrash metal."

Ensiferum take the right path for their seventh album

ENSIFERUM
Two Paths
METAL BLADE

Finnish folk metal veterans refresh their fighting spirit

IT'S HARD TO believe a whole decade has passed since Ensiferum released *Victory Songs*. Their third album, it was their first to feature the fierce harsh vocals and axe-wielding abilities of Petri Lindroos, and it firmly established them as a live favourite at a time when Finnish folk metal was exploding and swords, shields and drinking horns were omnipresent at every outdoor metal festival. Out of the plethora of bands that cropped up back then, Ensiferum are one of the few still going strong and they're sounding better than ever on new record *Two Paths*, presenting a heavy, organic and modern update to their sound. Bookended by two Finnish-language songs, *Ajattomasta Unesta* ('Out Of An Ageless Sleep') and *Unettomaan Aikaan* ('Into A Sleepless Age'), it's an album full of their signature high-energy riffing, warlike choral chants and contagious folk melodies. One thing that's apparent as soon as the joyous *For Those About To Fight For Metal* kicks in is the more organic sound of previous album, *One Man Army*, as they build songs like the fantastic title track around more guitar-centric melodies – and to their credit, do away with keyboards altogether in favour of the digital accordion. Played by the outrageously talented Netta Skog (formerly of Turisas), the instrument lends texture and weight to the defiant *Don't You Say* and *Feast With Valkyries*. Interestingly, both *Don't You Say* and the furious *God Is Dead* have two versions, alternating classic Ensiferum with shades of punk rock. In a subgenre where novelty can become tiresome all too easily, Ensiferum have refreshed the folk metal sound. **8**

FOR FANS OF: Finntroll, Korpiklaani, Turisas

CATHERINE MORRIS

Satyricon look ahead to a new era

SATYRICON

Deep Calleth Upon Deep

NAPALM

A new dawn for Norway's diabolical blackhearts

WHEN SATYRICON REVISITED their classic third album, *Nemesis Divina*, for their 2016 world tour, there was a strong sense that the nostalgic decks were being briskly cleared to enable this instinctively forward-looking band to embrace the future with a clear vision. Similarly, 2014's *Satyricon* felt very much like a definitive full stop at the end of an era and, with the haughty confidence that fans have come to expect, *Deep Calleth Upon Deep* is every bit the antagonistic flourish at the commencement of a new campaign. Opener *Midnight Serpent* is simply extraordinary; those unmistakably angular and menacing riffs are present and correct, of course, but everything sounds bigger, more muscular and fuller of figure than anything Satyricon have done before, with countless subtle details lurking amid the song's arrangement but never detracting from its power. *Blood Cracks Open The Ground* is even more stupidly exhilarating, with jarring stabs of dissonance and churning, sinister riffs underpinning one of Satyr's most commanding vocal performances. Next up, *To Your Brethren In The Dark* is a glacial, stately call-to-arms aimed squarely at the misanthropic masses, the subtle melancholy that has long underpinned Satyricon's music emerging in more blatant form. In contrast, *The Ghost Of Rome* is a succinct and oddly catchy four-to-the-floor goth-rock stomper, replete with haunting operatic backing vocals and an insistent lead guitar refrain. Best of the lot is the seven-minute *Black Wings And Withering Gloom*, wherein bleak blasting, bullying mid-paced momentum and Satyr's scabrous delivery combine to mesmerising effect. Elsewhere, squalling sax briefly pushes *Dissonant*'s barrage of brooding aggro into avant-noise territory, one of innumerable moments on *Deep Calleth Upon Deep* when Satyricon sound like they have just tapped into a fresh well of inspiration and are determined to drain it dry.

9

FOR FANS OF: Bathory, Ihsahn, Primordial

DOM LAWSON

PUPPY

Vol II Remastered

SPINEFARM

Instantly appealing rockers relocate their base

Combining 90s influences from groove metal to indie rock, Puppy are an intriguing prospect. Freshly signed to Spinefarm, the trio have reissued their *Vol II* EP in an "expanded and remastered" form. The songs still sound as good as they did a year ago, Jock Norton's unnaturally high-pitched voice somehow finding a comfortable home nestled among earth-shaking riffs, and carving out hooks that'll be on a determined loop in your head for a week. Truth be told, there's very little here to draw in anyone who splashed out on the 2016 release – just one additional song, *Beast*, and some extra punch in the charmingly lo-fi production, particularly the drums – but for those yet to experience Puppy's eclectic cocktail of influences this is as good a place to start as any. It's been a couple of years, though, lads. Can we have an album now?

8

FOR FANS OF: Deftones, Weezer, Smashing Pumpkins

ROB BARBOUR

RADIO MOSCOW

New Beginnings

CENTURY MEDIA

Freewheeling blues/psych troupe keep spreading the jams

San Diego's feverish psych rock revivalists have returned with another bong-sparking blowout, packed to the brim with blazing tempos, cartwheeling jams and the wild-eyed shredding of frontman Parker Griggs. Expertly channelling the kaleidoscopic intersection of electric blues and cosmic psychedelia in the late 60s, tracks like *Last To Know* and *Deceiver* richly evoke the sense of freewheeling indulgence and improvisational showmanship of that era. Jams build upon jams without any regard for brevity and restraint, in sharp contrast to modern conventions. That said, the field of microscopy has yet to advance to the degree necessary to measure the stylistic differences between the new album and its predecessor, *Magic Dirt*. As such, *New Beginnings* is not so much a new chapter as a defiantly joyful celebration of the Zeppelin style of blues that would one day give birth to heavy metal.

7

FOR FANS OF: Rival Sons, Wolfmother, Scorpion Child

JOE DALY

RESCUE RANGERS

Join Hate

F200

Gallic heavy rockers find friends in high places

Discovered by Mondo Generator's Nick Oliveri and championed by Helmet's Page Hamilton (who produced this album), Rescue Rangers' background is destined to make members of their local Marseilles scene as green with envy as it will make grandchildren proud. But it's all about the tunes as the probability of being sought after and in-demand increases proportionally with each killer song written. A fair share of Rescue Rangers' material makes it obvious what piqued initial interests as the revved-up heavy rock of the title track and *Moped Synch* are anthemic and equally coloured with power-pop infectiousness and wall-of-guitar magnitude. It's when the band take their foot off the accelerator that whatever grip they have on listeners also loosens. Dave Grohl would have been proud of *Broken Faces* and *Khalil* 15 years ago, but in the context of Rescue Rangers, it strikes a move from strength to lack of identity.

6

FOR FANS OF: Torche, Helmet, Foo Fighters

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GLOBAL METAL

ARALLU

Six

TRANSCENDING OBSCURITY

Israeli outfit Arallu's muscular black metal takes much of its cue from Rotting Christ, as frontman Butchered's vocals faithfully mimics Sakis's retch. They're over-reliant on their Middle Eastern instrumentation for dynamics, but *Six* is still a forceful statement of intent. **[6]**

JONATHAN SELZER

TARANTIST

Not A Crime

TARANTIST

These pioneering Iranian-American metallers return with another immersive voyage through shimmery exotic soundscapes, throaty alt-metal anthems and traditional Persian instrumentation. Think Type O and Muse roadtripping through Marrakesh on mushrooms. **[8]**

JOE DALY

VERTHEBRAL

Regeneration

SATANATH

The small Paraguayan extreme scene may still be seeking its own signature sound, but these youngsters are worthy flag-bearers. Paying respect to the Floridian DM sound, this debut comes across like a thrashier version of Monstrosity with flashes of early Nocturnus. **[7]**

OLIVIER BADIN

SHRAPNEL
Raised On Decay
CANDLELIGHT/SPINEFARM

East Anglian thrashers turn a new page on album number two

Three years on from the release of their neck-bothering debut, *The Virus Conspires*, Norwich thrashers Shrapnel's new LP sees the quintet deftly sidestep that 'difficult second album syndrome' by delivering a sequel that delivers on their promise in spades. Comprising 11 tracks – including a cover of Slayer staple *The Antichrist – Raised On Decay* is a flab-free opus full of frenetic yet focused energy, face-melting guitars and super-fast riffs. Informed by the storytelling of King Diamond and HP Lovecraft, the record builds on the classic thrash sound established on their debut by throwing in some punk (*Hollow Earth*), blues (*The Boundaries Set*) and classic rock influences (*Carved From Above*). There's a big step up in terms of songwriting, especially on the monstrous title track, which suggests they've got a bright future ahead. **7**

FOR FANS OF: Havok, Annihilator, Dark Angel

EDWIN McFEE

SKIES IN MOTION
Life Lessons
SELF-RELEASED

Anthemic post-hardcore crew confront personal tragedy

Three years have passed since this Nottingham quintet released their fairly unremarkable EP, *Dreamer*. In that time they've honed their craft, delivering a promising debut album. Taking their cues from Architects and While She Sleeps, *Realizantionship* and *Hopebringer* conjure up a *Lost Forever // Lost Together* aesthetic: an intense, downtuned battering balanced with flashes of bruised heart and melody and guttural vocals from Adam Connor. *Happy Families* charges along like *Deep Blue*-era Parkway before a splendid chorus springs from nowhere, striding headfirst into anthemic territory. Elsewhere, *Life Lessons* sets itself apart with real emotional heft amongst the muscle. *Gonvena* was written for guitarist Dave Stewart's mother, who died from cancer and includes the line: *'If I was lost, she was my one true North. She was the sunshine that followed storms'*. Skies In Motion are a band to watch. **7**

FOR FANS OF: Architects, While She Sleeps, Parkway Drive

DANNII LEIVERS

WIDOWMAKER
Widowmaker
SHARPTONE

Technical deathcore still trying to prise itself from the template

With Heart Of A Coward's future in doubt, Widowmaker's combo of techy nous and burly groove could see them step into the breach. As with their moniker, which has been used by others over the last few decades of rock history, their style is nothing that hasn't been heard before. However, there are subtle hints peppered across the Alabama quintet's debut EP that suggest they could be onto something quite special. Vocalist Matt Childers displays a diverse range at times but mostly settles into the familiar scream/growl pattern, while the murky *Dissonance* trades in both eerie textures and weighty breaks but just outstays its welcome. But with *Quarantine*'s seismic drops that are as heavy as anything else in modern deathcore, and *The Illusionist*'s killer harmonies and leads that develop underneath its chaotic bluster, Widowmaker's precision strike displays some subtlety. **6**

FOR FANS OF: Heart Of A Coward, Suicide Silence, After The Burial

ADAM REES

YARDS
Excitation Thresholds
TRUTHSEEKER MUSIC

Former Ghost Of A Thousand frontman charges back into action

Six years ago, The Ghost Of A Thousand, one of the most exciting and inventive bands in the UK hardcore scene, announced their imminent breakup. Now, five years since their final shows, it is wonderful to see frontman Tom Lacey back and doing what he does best, namely screaming until his lungs fill with blood. Colliding with your senses like a punch to the neck, Yards' debut album is abrasive and sharpened, jammed into your ear like Jagged Metal Krusty-O. The gnashing of teeth and crashing cymbals keep the whole record on edge as Tom's strained, throaty vocals permeate through the assault, with instruments dripping with sweat and spit. It's a shame that the muddy production hinders the impact of the band's laser-targeted attack, as they weave in and out of hardcore and touch on doomier, less aggressive expressions. That said, *Excitation Thresholds* would still beat you in a fight. **7**

FOR FANS OF: Converge, Rough Hands, Obliterations

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WITTR: back from the wilderness

WOLVES IN THE THRONE ROOM
Thrice Woven
ARTEMISIA

Washington's blackgaze pioneers return from the wilderness

IT ALMOST SEEMS as if Wolves In The Throne Room consciously escaped civilisation in order to not evolve into a tamed and dull version of themselves. Having withdrawn into the woods and mountains of Washington after the release of their 2011 album, *Celestial Lineage*, its 2014 ambient companion, *Celestite*, only emphasising their absence, it was starting to feel like they'd been gone forever. But with the ground laid by a few select live shows, they've returned with full force. Their sixth full-length is a celebration of the visceral and elemental, connecting with nature and the past through lyrics influenced by Norse mythology as well as through ambient recordings of crackling fire, raven's wing beats and crushing waves. It all adds up to a dense and dynamic sound that is as ethereal as it is furious and shattering, especially with the addition of longtime touring guitarist Kody Keyworth as a full-time member. *The Old Ones Are With Us*, for instance, is a textbook example of a black metal song that has the ability to drag you to the ground and lift you into higher spheres at the same time. Listening to *Thrice Woven*, it's hard to ignore the importance of the moments without blazing guitars, thunderous drums and Nathan Weaver's bloodcurdling shrieks, though; be it the acoustic guitar intro of *Born From The Serpent's Eye* or the grand harp dreaminess of interlude *Mother Owl, Father Ocean* – this is where the magic happens. Adding haunting contributions by Neurosis's Steve von Till and Swedish funereal pop star Anna von Hausswolff proves that the blackgaze trio feel so secure about their vision that they have no worries about stepping back and turning the spotlight on someone else if that is what a song needs – and rightly so. It's an absolute pleasure to have them back again. **8**

FOR FANS OF: Agalloch, Der Weg Einer Freiheit, Deafheaven

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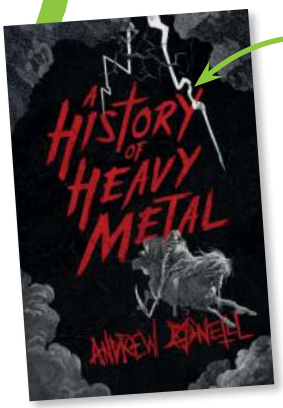

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BARB T-SHIRT

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Ha! Look! It's Barb, right, from *Stranger Things*, but with an Adele lyric. Do you get it? Do you? Because she's on 'the other side' like the Upside Down. Yeah? Do you get it? Yeah? Mum?

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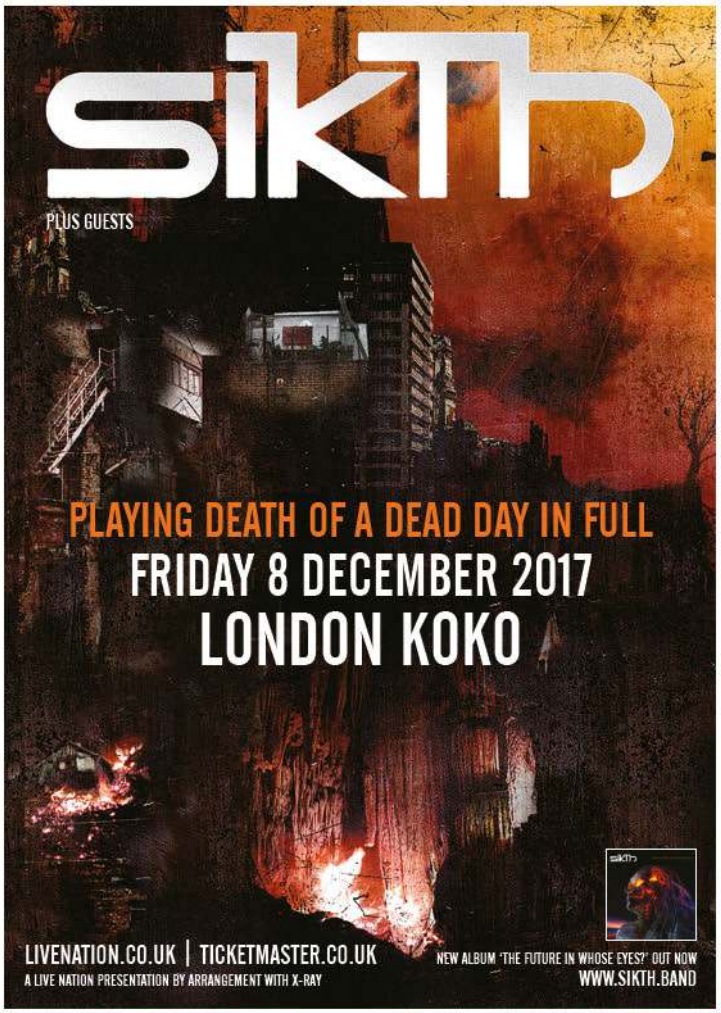

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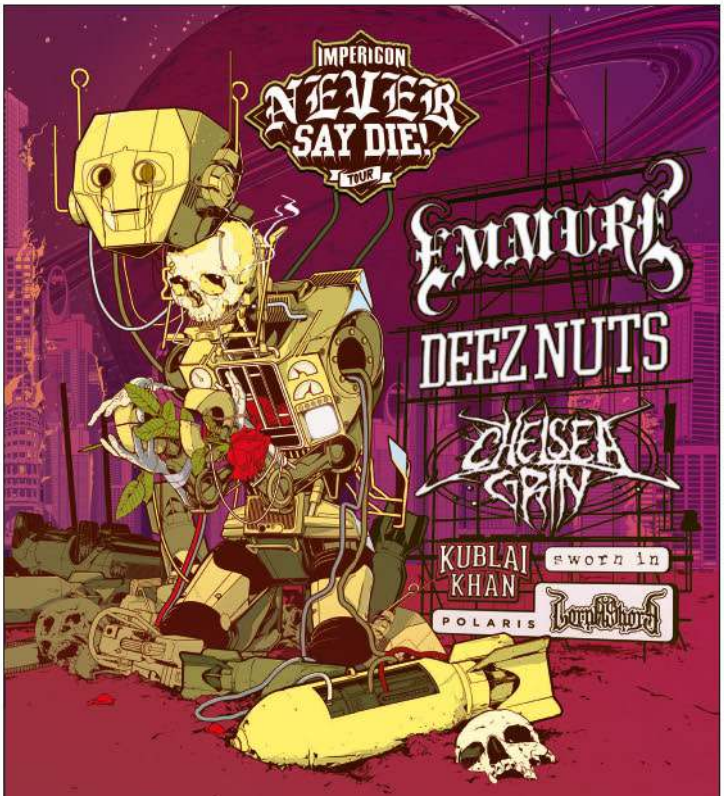

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Ghost's Papa Emeritus preaches to the inverted

Venom Prison: the future of extreme

BLOODSTOCK OPEN AIR 2017

CATTON HALL, DERBY

Johan Hegg's Viking horde is unstoppable

SETLIST

AMON AMARTH

The Pursuit of Vikings
As Loke Falls
First Kill
The Way of Vikings
At Dawn's First Light
Cry of the Black Birds
Deceiver of the Gods
Destroyer of the Universe
Varyags of Miklagaard
Death in Fire
Father of the Wolf
Runes to My Memory
War of the Gods
Raise Your Horns
Guardians of Asgaard

ENCORE

Twilight of the Thunder God

King 810's David shows us the butt of the Gunn

Chuck Billy leads the air guitaring masses

KEVIN NIXON

Amon Amarth, Megadeth and Ghost top off the best Bloodstock ever

THURSDAY/FRIDAY

The world has gone mad. Chaos reigns. But one thing is always certain: Bloodstock Open Air will rule harder than a bloodthirsty Egyptian pharaoh. The bars are open. Let there be metal! Playing the Sophie Lancaster Stage, **THE INFERNAL SEA [7]** become more potent with every passing performance. This is one of their best: an impassioned display of distorted, oddball treachery, before **BATTLE BEAST [9]** turn Thursday night into a celebration of metal's singalong power with wall-to-wall anthems and Noora Louhimo's extraordinary voice threatening to bring the tent crashing down. **FOREVER STILL [3]** are Main Stage openers on the Friday, but really shouldn't be. Their overwrought and flavourless post-grunge is no one's idea of a party-starter. **CHELSEA GRIN [6]** don't fare much better. The shudder of the deathcore also-rans' neverending breakdowns please a rabid few, but fail to wake a sleepy majority. **WHITECHAPEL [7]** step things up, their grooves punctuated with an extremity and charisma that sets them apart and sets heads banging. Dani Filth's **DEVILMENT [5]** do away with the deathcore, replacing it with lacklustre operatics that horrify for all the wrong reasons, but **SOILWORK [7]** reignite the party with their melodramatic melodeath. They might not quite hit former glories, but they do enough to keep everyone happy, even with some shoddy sound.

At the Sophie Lancaster Stage, **CORPSING [8]** provide old-school filth for the malevolent faithful. Their warped death metal is a toxic tonic and one of the most twisted noises at Bloodstock this year. **DECAPITATED [9]** are on staggering form on the Main Stage. To dominate your setlist with *Anticult* tracks that are barely a few weeks old and still bludgeon the crowd into a dumbfounded mess boasts of the band's confidence and vicious craft. Armed with ageless thrash classics like *Into The Pit* and new ragers like *Centuries Of Suffering*, **TESTAMENT [7]** can do no wrong and are cheerfully imperious. **BLACK MOTH [7]** exude all the hallmarks of a classic band on the SL Stage, with *Blackbirds Fall* all doomy reverberations and swagger. This weekend's thrash veterans would welcome a 10th of **SHRAPNEL**'s **[7]** vigour, and with *Eternal War* they have songs to back it up. It's not just the gold pyjamas and funky keys that make **LIONIZE [8]** stand out, but also the indisputable vibes that engulf the crowd.

BLIND GUARDIAN's **[8]** long-awaited return to Bloodstock on the Main Stage is a preposterous, bombastic triumph, even if Hansi Kursch looks increasingly like a well-dressed solicitor. Day headliners **AMON AMARTH [9]** deliver the balls-out Viking spectacle that their rise to headline status demands. Fire? Battling Vikings? Thor's Hammer? All check. Oh, and a remorseless succession of razor-sharp heavy metal anthems that reduces Bloodstock to a pile of thoroughly delighted smoking rubble. More than a coda, The everlasting permanence of black metal duo **INQUISITION**'s **[8]** blasting, pared-down savagery proves an entrancing spectacle on the SL Stage to close day one.

SATURDAY

Recently losing their singer does nothing to slow **FALLUJAH**'s **[8]** exhilarating tech-death, their futuristic, whirlwind detonations providing a rude early awakening on day two. **WINTERFYLLETH**'s **[7]** black metal odes to olde England are delivered with rousing ferocity, inspiring fist pumping chant-alongs in the morning sunshine before **HAVOK [8]** attack their Main Stage slot like maniacs and leave the entire festival breathless with pummelling pit-fodder like *Hang 'Em High*. Though missing guitarist Andrew Beale, the remaining members of **KING 810 [8]** step up to deliver one of the most visceral and vital sets of the weekend. **ANNIHILATOR [6]** seem initially pedestrian by comparison but have the songs and energy to charm both youngsters and old farts alike. **MUNICIPAL WASTE [7]** and **HATEBREED [8]** are perfect festival bands, the former's excessive zest and mischievous fire-starting chaos teeing up Jamey Jasta and co for a bulldozing set of evergreen anthems.

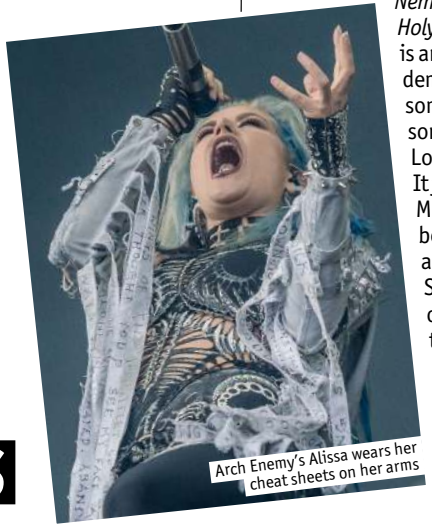
The grime/metal of **THE ONE HUNDRED [8]** brings a different vibe to the SL Stage, winning over apprehensive punters with punchy swagger. Few young UK bands have the presence of **ABHORRENT DECIMATION [8]**. Today they're a brutal, commanding revelation and must surely be Main Stage candidates next time out. The ground shakes when **((OHHMS)) [8]** unleash their first monumental, mind-wobbling riff and the tectonic rumble continues until everyone is deaf and shell-shocked. Newly fronted by Bull Riff Stampede's Jay Walsh, **XENTRIX [7]** sound like a work in progress, but the old classics still rule. Veterans of underground metal at its most hideous, **MACABRE [8]** slither and churn majestically as they close out the second stage. We will all have nightmares. On the Main Stage, **KREATOR [8]** consolidate their legacy as godfathers of the nastier end of thrash as a sea of heads bangs in the sunset. Anticipation has been brewing all weekend for **GHOST [9]**, and they prove worthy of closing Saturday's ceremonies. Already-great songs like *He Is, Zombie Queen* and *Elizabeth* are elevated to anthems amid reverent worship and mass singalongs. Ghost have arrived.

SUNDAY

Mancunian upstarts **BROKEN TEETH [7]** stamp Sunday morning hangovers into submission with muscular hardcore fuelled by youthful exuberance and venomous indignation, while **GRAVIL [7]** make the most of their SL Stage opening slot with a potent concoction of metallic precision and rousing anthem *Fractured, Divided*. **VENOM PRISON [8]** continue to impress. Their hardcore-infused death punishes with an intense delivery and visceral time changes. **BRUJERIA [6]** are daft but hugely entertaining. If nothing else, Matando Gueros still slams and we've all learned a bit of Español. Visibly revitalised, Jeff Becerra is having the time of his life as **POSSESSED [9]** rip the Main Stage crowd several new bumholes. Each. Heaviest band of the weekend, though? **OBITUARY [8]**, by a mile. From *Internal Bleeding* to *Slowly We Rot*, it's a monstrous display of riff-wielding destruction. **HELL [7]** are as musically vicious and theatrically wonky as ever, with mile-high pyro and Dave Bower tottering around on stilts, as camp as Xmas but way more evil.

Sadly, MegaDave doesn't have the chops this time out

PUPPY [8] have an undeniable bite with their brawny arsenal of Smashing Pumpkins-esque grunge and hulking riffs thrilling the SL Stage. Harnessing insatiable energy and searing emotion, **SKINDRED [9]** are on raucous form in the open air and that arena-wide Newport helicopter is truly a sight to behold. Live, **ARCH ENEMY**'s **[7]** precision borders on clinical, but necks are snapped gleefully during a visceral *Nemesis*. From *Hangar 18* to *Holy Wars*, **MEGADETH**'s **[6]** set is an immaculate musical demonstration of how to deliver some of metal's greatest ever songs, with guitarist Kiko Loureiro on exceptional form. It just about makes up for Dave Mustaine's vocals, which veer between passable and at times almost incoherent. So it's up to **WINTERSUN [8]** to offer an adventurous climax to a fantastic weekend, and the epic folk metal Finns unleash a starry-eyed blitzkrieg that lingers long into the small hours.



Arch Enemy's Alissa wears her cheat sheets on her arms

MEGADETH DELIVER SOME OF METAL'S GREATEST SONGS

DOM LAWSON/SOPHIE MAUGHAN/ TOM O'BOYLE/ADAM REES

The Dillinger Escape Plan's Greg Puciato goes slightly awry

Alice Cooper gives a masterclass in rock'n'roll entertainment

Mayhem's Attila Csihar gets mystical

SETLIST

ALICE COOPER

Brutal Planet
No More Mr Nice Guy
Under My Wheels
The World Needs Guts
Woman Of Mass Distraction
Poison
Halo Of Flies
Feed My Frankenstein
Cold Ethyl
Only Women Bleed
Paranoiac Personality
Ballad Of Dwight Fry
Killer
I Love The Dead
I'm Eighteen
School's Out/Another Brick In The Wall
Ace Of Spades

WACKEN OPEN AIR 2017

WACKEN, SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN

Alice Cooper and Marilyn Manson head up Germany's metal Mecca

THURSDAY

Fifteen minutes is all it takes. One short, biblical downpour, compounded by the churn of 160,000 boots, and Wacken is turned into a quagmire. Not that it's going to affect the spirit of a festival that has long become both a place of pilgrimage and an annual national rite where for many; their allegiance can be summed up as 'Live, breathe, go to Wacken'. It's fitting that **ACCEPT**'s **[6]** two-hour, orchestra-annointed set should include *Ride Of The Valkyries* as if to rise above the conditions on the ground, but if the first half drowns out guitarist Wolf Hoffmann and his crew, when the band's own songs do start to emerge, the strings only add a layer of schmalz. Before you know what's happening, **NAPALM DEATH [7]** are in the tent to kick your ass with their frantic grindcore. Even their weakest performance is still better than most of the others', thanks to the Barney factor – you can only adore this guy's intelligence, gentleness and energy. Playing to a packed field, **VOLBEAT [6]** bring in thrash and even AC/DC-styled riffs to their all-ages rock'n'roll, given a certain potency by Michael Poulsen's booming yet wistful vocals. But this is still a middle ground that feels compensatory rather than galvanising, despite a brief appearance from Barney during *Evelyn*. Currently touring with *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas*, **MAYHEM**'s **[9]** performance turns into one noisy, hazy blur. Necrobutcher and co seem like mystical shadow creatures from the underworld, while Attila Csihar creeps around his altar of death screaming, grumbling and hissing. **NILE [8]** reverse the polarity, all their technical density whipping up a sonic vortex that threatens to suck the crowd into the speakers adding further levels of intoxication to an ecstatic audience.

ALICE COOPER'S PERFORMANCE IS LIKE AN ACTUAL ROCK MUSICAL

FRIDAY

Always musically immaculate, despite their bloody stage garb, **LACUNA COIL [6]** rouse a midday crowd with a strident set, but one that could have turned up flat-packed for all its organic expression. Offering a somewhat wider margin of error and emerging triumphant, **EVIL SCARECROW [7]** have the crowd doing the crabulon and robot squares in no time. The level of inventiveness that goes into their stage props, wedded to songs that manage to remain more metal than pantomime, suggests that there's a level of diligence that might actually be a serious endeavour. The award for the most spiritless performance of the weekend goes to **THE AMITY AFFLICTION [3]**, especially as shouter Joel Birch is so free of emotion and energy that it makes you feel physically aggressive to watch him. **TRIVIUM [6]** fare better, though the most interesting moment of their show is their pyro equipment catching fire. **GRAND MAGUS**'s **[9]** knack for making songs about nobility and steel actually sound both noble and steely enthrals a rammed tent, split into two halves to chant each part of the "Viking!! Metal!!" equation. If the constant trudging across, and largely under, fields is starting to take its toll, **PARADISE LOST [8]** offer a welcome retreat, even if the sound is intermittently whipped away by the cruel, cruel wind. Nick Holmes has looked like he's

DEREK BREMNER

Trivium go down in flames

Marilyn Manson: the god of fucked-up

Good vibes and rock'n'roll from Orange Goblin

Lacuna Coil's Cristina Scabbia having a bloody lovely time

been enjoying himself a lot more onstage of late, and the energy transfers to a set that traverses the crushing doom of *Beneath Broken Earth* and relatively upbeat, gothic trudge of *Say Just Words* with stately conviction. Having lost his guitar on the way, **THE DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN [7]** guitarist Ben Weinman is not in the best mood. The distance between the band and the audience also takes its toll, making the performance unusually tame. Playing the main Harder stage to an unexpectedly small crowd, **EMPEROR**'s **[8]** celebration of *Anthems To The Welkin At Dusk* widens the lens of the original, navigating the sweep and grandeur more than the tumult. There is magic being wrought tonight, though, Ihsahn still leading us across a threshold where all your senses are supercharged. **ARCHITECTS [7]** showcase a pretty perfect performance, matching great sound, an awesome light show and good energy, even if there's not much fury or spontaneity. **MARILYN MANSON [4]** has plenty of that; his performance can simply be described as a disaster. After coming onstage almost on time and playing some OK first songs, the show quickly goes downhill, to the point where Manson is just wordlessly laying on the floor with Twiggy and then forcing a crew member to translate his shit-faced announcements. Go home, Marilyn, you're drunk.

SATURDAY

Sounding like the final victory song of a fantasy epic, **TWILIGHT FORCE**'s **[8]** absurd exuberance doesn't make sense so much as override it, as inflatable swords are raised aloft and massed choral chants forge a momentum where it would only be foolish to let go. **MAX & IGGOR CAVALERA [7]** bring Sepultura's *Roots* album back to life. Twenty-one years later, it hasn't lost any of its force and especially when the brothers get lost in their percussion instrumentals, you remember what a damn great record this was. They're followed by two German favourites who could hardly be any more different: **HEAVEN SHALL BURN [7]** with their earthshaking metalcore, and **POWERWOLF [6]** with their primitivity and obscenity – and the audience loves both of them equally. That **ORANGE GOBLIN**'s **[8]** first Wacken appearance would win over the hordes was never in doubt, but as Ben Ward raises up moshpits as though through sheer physical will, today's set feels like a celebration of something elemental. The best show of the weekend is played by **ALICE COOPER [9]**, though. His performance is like an actual rock musical, with costumes, plotlines and everything. Also, the band sounds amazing. Look, Marilyn, this is how entertainment works! **KATATONIA [8]** create a beautiful emotional atmosphere on the third stage. You can't dwell on their melancholy and Jonas Renkse's angelic voice for too long, though, because **AVANTASIA [3]** are already set up. So! Much! Drama! Everything about their performance is over the top. Tobias Sammet's squawking voice and long announcements quickly become unbearable. In the tent, **BRITISH LION [7]** offer a powerful counterweight. Steve Harris's basslines of course thump and twang with a titanium pulse, but the richness of Richard Taylor's vocals, aligned with subtly progressive dynamics and a vintage warmth, prove this is more than a one-man show as the course of heavy metal once more runs deep.

JONATHAN SELZER/CHRISTINA WENIG

Reign in mud

CONVERGE'S RAW ENERGY IS LIMITLESS

Converge's Jake Bannon gives the crowd something to chew over

Ho99o9 dial up the delirium

Sikth blow the barn doors off at ArcTangent

Tesseract: the thinking person's metal band

ARCTANGENT

FERNHILL FARM, COMPTON MARTIN

Metal groundbreakers brave the Somerset elements

IT'S PRETTY MUCH guaranteed to rain in Somerset if you're planning a festival, but torrential downpours can't deter the 5,000 attendees at the fifth annual ArcTanGent. In spite of it size, this muddy farm manages to retain a unique sense of remoteness as it provides a platform for an eclectic line-up of genre-bending acts. New Jersey's **HO99O9 [7]** storm the stage on Friday. Their experimental yet aggressive sound brings together elements of dub, reggae, hardcore and afro-punk, and along with their captivating stage presence it all adds up to quite the spectacle. The skies open just as **CONVERGE [8]** take the stage, blasting *Dark Horse* to the audience's delight. Despite being packed in like sardines, the main stage tent can't shelter more than 70% of the crowd, and many are left out in the cold. There's a waterfall pouring off the side of the gazebo and yet fans stick it out to the bitter end in the utterly atrocious weather, graciously noted by Jacob Bannon. Converge's raw energy is limitless and calms only once midway through their set with the haunting *Eve*. They return to their chaotic pace for the remainder of the set, neither band nor audience able to remain still for a single moment before the curtain call of *Jane Doe*. Saturday's delights – aside from a break in the wet weather, include **TESSERACT [8]**, playing their final UK show before returning to the studio to record their fourth LP. The Milton Keynes prog metal outfit proceed to weave their way through classics old and new with vocalist Dan Tompkins belting through Ashe O'Hara-era songs as effortlessly as his own. London tech-metal sextet **SIKTH [9]** dip into tracks from all three albums, much to the delight of the audience who can barely contain themselves through opener *Suffice*, the pit-prompting *Pussyfoot* and newbie *Golden Cufflinks*. Texas's **EXPLOSIONS IN THE SKY [8]** bring another ArcTanGent to an expansive close as their special breed of organically woven post-rock symphonies mesmerises the crowd. Each song melts into the next, until finally Chris Hrasky and co end with the soothing *The Only Moment We Were Alone*, gracefully marking the end of a weekend filled with shining examples of metal at its finest and most far-sighted.

ALICE PATTILLO

SETLIST

CONVERGE

Dark Horse
Aimless Arrow
Under Duress
Trespasses
All We Love We Leave Behind
Predatory Glow
Reap What You Sow
Cutter
Worms Will Feed/Rats Will Feast
Eve
I Can Tell You About Pain
Eagles Become Vultures
Concubine
Jane Doe

CRYPTOPSY
BLACK SKIES BURN

UNDERWORLD, LONDON

You'll seldom see a band as ragged as **BLACK SKIES BURN [7]** be so enjoyable. The Oxfordshire quartet burst through a set of blasting, crusty grind that, with songtitles like *Cunt The Fuck Off*, clearly doesn't take itself very seriously. Despite their ramshackle onstage persona, the music gets them over the line. It definitely becomes a slicker affair upon **CRYPTOPSY**'s **[8]** arrival. The Canadians have more than 25 years of penning technically masterful, ultra-violent death metal behind them and tonight play 1996's *None So Vile* in its entirety. What comes across when hearing fan faves like *Slit Your Guts* is just how fresh they still sound. Even though some might wish to have seen the Crypotpsy line-up that recorded the album, this incarnation is as tight and focused as ever. Vocalist Christian Donaldson is an excellent frontman who commands the crowd with a cry of "Come on, you cunts" before throwing his imposing frame around the stage and sole surviving member Flo Mounier is the octopus-armed human metronome he always was. Cryptopsy are still vile.

STEPHEN HILL

DEATH ANGEL
WARBRINGER

UNDERWORLD, LONDON

Tonight Camden is about to witness two bands who have more than met their match in each other – in a packed Underworld on Bloodstock weekend, no less. First up are the sickeningly talented **WARBRINGER [8]**, who quickly turn the venue into one big circlepit as they deftly slay their way through a fast and brutal set – the highlight being the spinetingling *When The Guns Fell Silent* – with crisp shredding and hefty riffs culminating in the electrifying *Combat Shock*. When it's time for Bay Area thrash veterans **DEATH ANGEL [9]**, like Warbringer, it takes very little time for the audience to mobilise. *Father Of Lies* and the excellent *Lost* from last year's *The Evil Divide* album go down just as well as old favourite *Kill As One*. Frontman Mark Osegueda thrives off fan interaction, joking around when he introduces *The Moth* as "*our* moth song", closing a near-perfect set that's ferocious, rebellious and joyful in the way that only classic metal can be.

CATHERINE MORRIS

Liz Buckingham has the riff of sulphur about her

Jus Oborn turns the Bierkeller into an infernal affair

ELECTRIC WIZARD
ANGEL WITCH

BIERKELLER, BRISTOL

Dorset's doom demigods bewitch the West Country

TONIGHT'S SPECIAL GUESTS, the old-school heavy metal legends **ANGEL WITCH [7]**, give the crowd a good warm-up, but not even their classic, self-titled closing track can match the headliners for occult-steeped vividness. The Dorset heroes' vintage Satanic imagery sets the scene for their crushingly heavy, acidic breed of British doom. It's less than five minutes into *Funeralopolis* and the crowd is already entranced. **ELECTRIC WIZARD [8]** have conjured up a black mass, reigning supreme from their dopethrone. Dedicated disciples are compelled to get as close as possible, and a swarm of sweaty bodies thrust up against the stage, clambering over each other to get a fraction closer. Bierkeller is a notoriously hot venue but even the sweltering heat can't discourage this sea of mesmerised followers from some spirited headbanging. It's easy to see why metal is seen as not just a music genre but as almost a form of religion when you see Wizard's bewitching stage presence. With the domineering, sludgy vocals and bluesy riffage of Jus Oborn and Liz Buckingham's crunching chords, the minor technical issues go almost unnoticed, fixed seamlessly mid-song. A man of few words, Jus need only rely on his filthy dirge of occult lyrics and a few chants of 'Black mass' to rally the crowd. Their set, culminating in *Vinum Sabbathi*, doesn't require an encore, as the band storm off the stage, abandoning their starry-eyed fanatics to a state of awe.

ALICE PATTILLO

Becca MacIntyre samples the taste of success

Marmozets put their backs into their first London show in two years

MARMOZETS

BORDERLINE, LONDON

Yorkshire's punk/glam shakers blast back from exile

IT'S ALMOST TWO years to the day since Marmozets last played the UK and, judging by the buzz in the room tonight, today couldn't come soon enough. Stepping onstage at this revamped London dive, the Yorkshire punks receive a heroes' welcome before plunging headfirst into the frenzied *Move, Shake, Hide*. There's an initial air of ring rust, which is to be expected, but you can almost taste the energy bursting out onto the floor of baying, sweaty bodies. The band are a mixture of snarls and smiles, exuding that punk coolness we've come to expect, but they also look more grown-up, physically and emotionally. Drummer Josh Macintyre puts in a devastating shift, kicking all hell out of his kit, busting his lip in the process, while Becca blows away the cobwebs brilliantly with her aggressive and erratic movements – a reminder that she could effortlessly still kick seven shades out of us. Throughout the night, Marmozets treat us to five new songs, including recent single *Play*, which already feels at home in the set as pockets of the crowd are singing every word. The next album sounds like it's not going to be as heavy, but they're still packing *those* choruses that the MacIntyre and Bottomley families do so well, hulking like Kong on chest day. And as Becca stands in the middle of the floor, screaming out *Why Do You Hate Me?* before being crowdsurfed around, it's both weird and wonderful to see Marmozets back where they belong. Let's do this again soon, please.

LUKE MORTON

9

ARCTANGENT & ELECTRIC WIZARD: DUNCAN EVERSON/MARMOZETS: JAKE OWENS

KORN SOUND TIGHTER THAN EVER

Jonathan Davis: in fine voice

Munky laughs off middle age

KORN

HACKTIVIST

BRIXTON ACADEMY, LONDON

Bakersfield's nu metal icons roll back the years

LAST YEAR'S *THE* *Serenity Of Suffering* saw Korn continue a rich vein of form, with many of the songs sounding like they could have been plucked straight from their early albums. The fact that Brixton Academy is sold-out tonight despite Korn having played in London last December, and that the audience features a wide-ranging scope of ages including plenty who probably weren't even born when nu metal was the norm, proves that Jonathan Davis and co are pretty much as popular as they've ever been.

Before they hit the stage, though, **HACKTIVIST [7]** bring their djent-hop hybrid to a quickly filling Academy, performing with supercharged energy to win over plenty of those in attendance. Those thinking rap metal was dead are in for a pleasant surprise here: the venue is near-packed already, and the London band prove a perfect fit for the headliners.

While many bands at the middle-aged mark still slog away at the touring circuit to pay the bills, sporting midlife paunches and an apathetic approach to their craft, **KORN [8]** are not one of these bands. Jonathan Davis in particular appears in great shape in his patterned trademark kilt, bounding across the stage with enthusiasm and hitting the notes with a notable confidence that he lacked in his early years. And so he should; Korn are tighter than ever.

Tonight is essentially a greatest hits set, though new tracks like *Rotting In Vain* and *Black Is The Soul* get solid responses and blend into the set with ease. *Falling Away From Me* is dropped second song in, for *Shoots And Ladders* the bagpipe appears, and all the while the energy in the audience is electric – hot as hell, but revved up and bouncing off the walls.

As well as a stunning light show, behind Korn is a huge screen that flashes random imagery and illustrations, from geometric shapes and derelict buildings to a haunting merry-go-round, but they don't even need the backdrop when the performance is this solid. A four-song encore closes with the inevitable *Freak On A Leash* as smoke machines explode and the audience belt back the words: going by tonight, Korn are still here to stay.

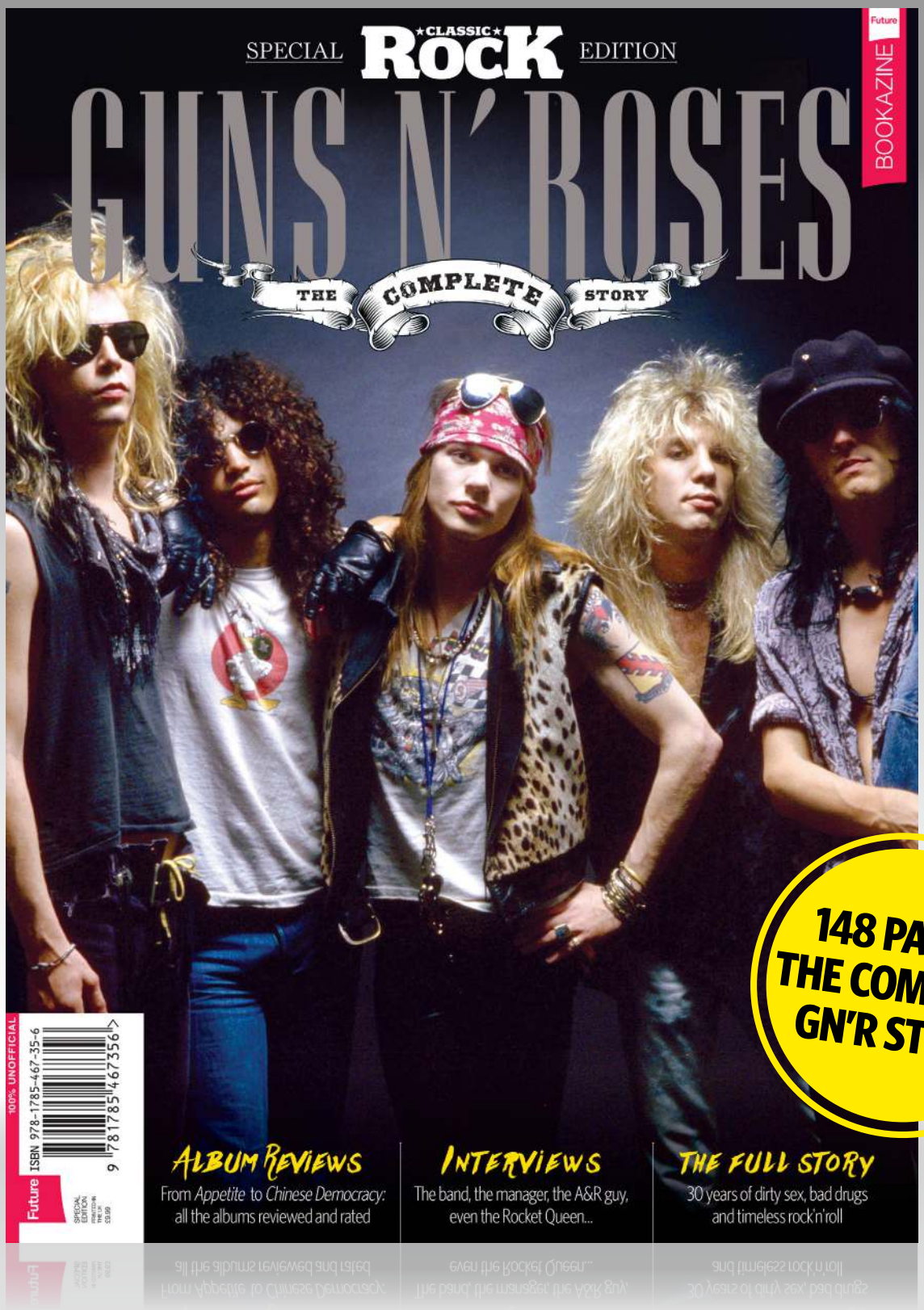
HANNAH MAY KILROY

SETLIST

Rotting In Vain
Falling Away From Me
Here To Stay
Y'All Want A Single
Clown
Black Is The Soul
Did My Time
Shoots And Ladders
Twist
Got The Life
Coming Undone
Insane
Make Me Bad
Somebody Someone

ENCORE

4 U
Blind
It's On!
Freak On A Leash



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METAL HAMMER

LIVE EVIL

SEPT 19 2017 • 2017

Bury Tomorrow are revisiting their roots

BURY TOMORROW

The British metalcore heroes get up close and personal

YOU'RE GOING BACK TO INTIMATE SHOWS FOR THIS UK TOUR. WHY DID YOU OPT FOR THEM INSTEAD OF BIGGER VENUES?

Davyd Winter-Bates (bass): "There's something really special about no barrier, being in front of the crowd and stuff like that. It's super-nice to play huge shows, but getting in a van and playing every venue that we possibly could, *that* is what we built our career on."

SO YOU'RE GOING BACK TO YOUR ROOTS THEN?

"Definitely! We always talk about being there for our fans and how our fans are our number one priority, and they really are. But when you do those big UK tours, you only really get to hit the major cities. It's not just about the size of the venues, it's about the locations and the size of the tour, as well. We're trying to get to as many fans as possible, so this is one of the longest UK tours we've done since first starting, really."

METALCORE ALMOST ALWAYS GOES DOWN REALLY WELL LIVE. WHAT IS IT ABOUT YOUR STYLE THAT GETS SUCH A GREAT REACTION FROM A CROWD?

"I think it does come down to fun. You look at a lot of bands in our genre and they're having fun. And when they have fun, the crowd really, really gets behind it. And in this day and age where you spend 10 to 20 quid on a show, you don't wanna go and watch the CD: you want to see the little quirks live, all the little in-jokes within the band and make new memories. Particularly for us, we love to have fun onstage every night and although we might play the same set for an entire tour, we want each night to feel different."

YOU WROTE YOUR LATEST ALBUM, *EARTHBOUND*, WHILE ON TOUR. WILL YOU BE WRITING NEW MATERIAL ON THIS NEXT RUN?

"We're out with Trivium at the moment and we're already writing! We're very much in the early stages, making demos and writing songs, but the process has started again. Every day we come in and set up our little studio and we just start collecting ideas together, so that we're always ready for the next step."

ALTER BRIDGE

OCT 2-3 LONDON ROYAL ALBERT HALL

ARCHITECTS

WHILE SHE SLEEPS
COUNTERPARTS

FEB 2 LONDON ALEXANDRA PALACE

BURY TOMORROW

OCT 19 DOVER BOOKING HALL
OCT 20 SOUTHEND CHINNERYS
OCT 21 BRIGHTON CONCORDE 2
OCT 22 NORWICH WATERFRONT STUDIO
OCT 24 PETERBOROUGH MET LOUNGE
OCT 25 DONCASTER VINTAGE BAR
OCT 26 YORK FIBBERS
OCT 27 MIDDLESBROUGH EMPIRE
OCT 28 ABERDEEN TUNNELS
OCT 29 EDINBURGH MASH HOUSE
OCT 31 CARLISLE BRICKYARD
NOV 01 HUDDERSFIELD THE PARISH
NOV 02 LIVERPOOL O2 ACADEMY 2
NOV 03 STOKE SUGARMILL
NOV 04 MILTON KEYNES CRAUFORD ARMS
NOV 05 WORCESTER MARRS BAR
NOV 07 OXFORD O2 ACADEMY 2
NOV 08 BRIDGEND HOBOS
NOV 09 BATH MOLES
NOV 10 EXETER PHOENIX
NOV 11 PLYMOUTH UNDERGROUND
NOV 12 BOURNEMOUTH ANVIL (MATINEE)
NOV 12 BOURNEMOUTH ANVIL

CREEPER

DEC 3 GLASGOW ABC
DEC 4 BIRMINGHAM INSTITUTE
DEC 5 BRISTOL TRINITY
DEC 7 LONDON SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE
DEC 9 MANCHESTER ALBERT HALL
DEC 10 SOUTHAMPTON GUILDHALL

DAMNATION FESTIVAL:

BLOODBATH, PARADISE LOST, SODOM, SODOM, DYING FETUS, PALLBEARER + MORE

NOV 4 LEED ULU

DECAPITATED

KING PARROT, VENOM PRISON, THY DISEASE

NOV 8 NORWICH WATERFRONT
NOV 9 NOTTINGHAM RESCUE ROOMS
NOV 10 BRISTOL THEKLA
NOV 11 BIRMINGHAM ACADEMY 2
NOV 12 PORTSMOUTH WEDEROOMS
NOV 13 STOKE ON TRENT SUGARMILL
NOV 14 GLASGOW CLASSIC GRAND
NOV 15 LEEDS KEY CLUB
NOV 16 MANCHESTER ACADEMY 3
NOV 17 LONDON UNDERWORLD

DRAGONFORCE

OCT 4 GLASGOW GARAGE
OCT 5 NEWCASTLE RIVERSIDE
OCT 6 YORK FIBBERS
OCT 7 SHEFFIELD CORPORATION
OCT 8 MANCHESTER SOUND CONTROL
OCT 11 BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY 2
OCT 12 CARDIFF GLOBE
OCT 13 ELECTRIC BALLROOM
OCT 14 PORTSMOUTH WEDGEWOOD ROOMS
OCT 15 TUNBRIDGE WELLS FORUM

ENSLAVED

NOV 24 LONDON ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL

FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH

IN FLAMES, OF MICE & MEN

DEC 17 BIRMINGHAM BCA
DEC 18 GLASGOW HYDRO
DEC 20 LEEDS ARENA
DEC 21 LONDON WEMBLEY ARENA

FOZZY

OCT 27 BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY 2
OCT 28 DUBLIN TIVOLI
OCT 29 BELFAST LIMELIGHT 2
OCT 31 CHESTER LIVE ROOMS
NOV 1 MANCHESTER ACADEMY
NOV 2 LONDON O2 ACADEMY ISLINGTON
NOV 3 SHEFFIELD CORPORATION
NOV 5 NEWCASTLE RIVERSIDE

GRAVE PLEASURES

NOV 5 BRIGHTON HOPE & RUIN
NOV 6 BRISTOL EXCHANGE
NOV 7 LONDON ELEKTROWERKZ
NOV 9 GLASGOW GARAGE

HIM

DEC 14 GLASGOW BARROWLAND
DEC 15 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY
DEC 16 MANCHESTER ACADEMY
DEC 17 LONDON ROUNDHOUSE
DEC 19 LONDON ROUNDHOUSE

LENMANIA

JAMIE LENMAN, EMPLOYED TO SERVE, PALM READER + MORE

NOV 11 LONDON DOME

LEPROUS
NOV 2 LONDON DOME
NOV 3 DUBLIN VOODOO LOUNGE
NOV 5 LEEDS DAMNATION FESTIVAL

MAMMOTHFEST
ROTTING CHRIST, FLESHGOD APOCALYPSE, AMENRA + MORE
OCT 6-7 BRIGHTON VARIOUS VENUES

MARILYN MANSON
DEC 4 MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO
DEC 5 GLASGOW O2 ACADEMY
DEC 6 WOLVERHAMPTON CIVIC HALL
DEC 8 NEWPORT CENTRE
DEC 9 LONDON WEMBLEY ARENA

MASTODON
DEC 2 CARDIFF GREAT HALL
DEC 4 WOLVERHAMPTON CIVIC HALL
DEC 5 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY
DEC 6 NEWCASTLE NORTHUMBRIA UNI
DEC 7 GLASGOW BARROWLAND
DEC 9 MANCHESTER ACADEMY
DEC 10 LONDON O2 BRIXTON ACADEMY

METALLICA
KVELERTAK
OCT 22 LONDON O2 ARENA
OCT 24 LONDON O2 ARENA
OCT 26 GLASGOW SSE HYDRO
OCT 28 MANCHESTER ARENA
OCT 30 BIRMINGHAM GENTING ARENA

MOTIONLESS IN WHITE
JAN 18 SOUTHAMPTON ENGINE ROOMS
JAN 19 BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY
JAN 20 LEEDS STYLUS
JAN 22 GLASGOW GARAGE
JAN 23 NEWCASTLE RIVERSIDE
JAN 25 LONDON KOKO
JAN 26 BIRMINGHAM O2 INSTITUTE
JAN 27 MANCHESTER O2 RITZ
JAN 28 NORWICH WATERFRONT

NORTHLANE
NOV 25 LONDON ELECTRIC BALLROOM
NOV 26 MANCHESTER ACADEMY 2
NOV 27 GLASGOW GARAGE
NOV 28 BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY
NOV 29 LEEDS STYLUS
NOV 30 BRISTOL MARBLE FACTORY
DEC 1 NOTTINGHAM RESCUE ROOMS

OPETH
ENSLAVED
NOV 15 MANCHESTER O2 RITZ
NOV 16 GLASGOW BARROWLANDS
NOV 17 BELFAST LIMELIGHT
NOV 18 DUBLIN ACADEMY
NOV 19 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY
NOV 21 BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY
NOV 22 BIRMINGHAM O2 INSTITUTE

PAPA ROACH
OCT 5 BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY
OCT 6 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY
OCT 7 GLASGOW O2 ACADEMY
OCT 10 LONDON O2 ACADEMY
OCT 11 MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO

PARADISE LOST
PALLBEARER
NOV 3 LONDON ELECTRIC BALLROOM

SIKTH
DEC 2 MANCHESTER ACADEMY 3
DEC 3 GLASGOW GARAGE
DEC 4 BIRMINGHAM O2 INSTITUTE
DEC 6 BRISTOL CONCORDE 2
DEC 8 LONDON KOKO

THY ART IS MURDER
AFTER THE BURIAL, OCEANO, JUSTICE FOR THE DAMNED
OCT 3 CARDIFF UNIVERSITY
OCT 4 LEEDS KEY CLUB
OCT 5 GLASGOW GARAGE
OCT 6 MANCHESTER CLUB ACADEMY
OCT 7 BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY 2
OCT 8 LONDON ELECTRIC BALLROOM
OCT 9 NOTTINGHAM RESCUE ROOMS

UNEVEN STRUCTURE
VOYAGER
OCT 9 LONDON UNDERWORLD
OCT 10 BIRMINGHAM FLAPPER
OCT 11 DUBLIN VOODOO LOUNGE
OCT 12 GLASGOW AUDIO
OCT 13 MANCHESTER SATAN'S HOLLOW
OCT 14 GUILDFORD BOILER ROOM

Voyager: coming to fuck your ear pussies in October

VOYAGER
The Aussies bring the prog with Uneven Structure

HOW GLAMOROUS IS LIFE ON THE ROAD WITH VOYAGER?
Simone Dow (guitar): "On our first US tour, we were all wearing the same outfits to every show and it smelled so bad we had to spray Febreze on everything! When we finally got to wash them, we couldn't work the dryer so we had to put our wet clothes back on to go onstage – our clothes went from wet to dry, then wet with sweat again. That's the most traumatic experience I've had."

WHAT'S YOUR FONDEST MEMORY OF TOURING SO FAR?
"We once toured in a proper home-sized RV with a double bed in the back, massive bunkbeds, entertainment systems and even a PlayStation. We're not used to that much room, we do everything very minimalist on the road. The guys laugh at me because I pack lighter than they do – I'm so self conscious about being the girl that takes everything with her."

WHAT'S THE CRAZIEST THING YOU'VE SEEN IN A VOYAGER CROWD SO FAR?
"We hadn't played a gig in our hometown of Perth for a while and we came onstage to see these five guys in the crowd holding up a sign saying 'Voyager fucks my ear pussy!' We were trying to play but we kept fucking everything up 'cause we couldn't stop laughing!"

DO YOUR FANS GIVE YOU UNUSUAL PRESENTS?
"When we go to America, everyone wants to feed us – cakes, brownies, the lot. Once, a guy tried to shove a whole cheesecake onstage while I was setting up my gear… like, dude, can I grab it from you later? It was really good cheesecake but there's a time and a place for that."

HAS TOURING LIVED UP TO YOUR EXPECTATIONS OVER THE YEARS?
"I wouldn't swap this job for anything. I love travelling with my best friends, playing in random cities with people wearing our merch with tattoos of us. It's like a reward for surviving mundane real life. This October run will be the longest we've ever done but we get to meet new people and build our fanbase along the way. I was born in Scotland but I'm ashamed to say I've never been to Ireland so I'm really excited."

SUBTERRANEA
GOING UNDERGROUND

Deströyer 666: hitting the road with Belphegor and Enthroned

BELPHEGOR
DESTRÖYER 666, ENTHRONED
OCT 8 LONDON THE DOME
OCT 10 GLASGOW AUDIO
OCT 11 NEWCASTLE RIVERSIDE
OCT 12 BELFAST LIMELIGHT 2
OCT 13 DUBLIN VOODOO LOUNGE

BONG
NECRO DEATHMORT, 11PARANOIAS, GHOLD
SEP 23 LONDON KAMIO

KADAVAR
SEP 30 LONDON THE DOME

MORBID ANGEL
NOV 15 LONDON ISLINGTON ACADEMY
NOV 16 BRISTOL BIERKELLER
NOV 17 MANCHESTER SOUND CONTROL
NOV 18 BELFAST LIMELIGHT 2
NOV 19 DUBLIN THE ACADEMY
NOV 22 WOLVERHAMPTON SLADE ROOMS

NAILS
NOV 4 GLASGOW CATHOUSE
NOV 6 BRISTOL THE FLEECE
NOV 7 LONDON UNDERWORLD

UFOMAMMUT
OCT 3 LONDON BORDERLINE

ULVER
NOV 15 LONDON ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL

WINDHAND
OCT 9 LONDON BORDERLINE
OCT 10 LEEDS BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB
OCT 11 GLASGOW AUDIO
OCT 12 MANCHESTER REBELLION
OCT 13 BRISTOL EXCHANGE

WINTERFYLLETH
FEN
SEP 28 LONDON BOSTON MUSIC ROOMS
SEP 29 CARDIFF FUEL
SEP 30 MANCHESTER REBELLION
OCT 1 GLASGOW AUDIO
OCT 2 BIRMINGHAM MAMA ROUX'S

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SUBTERRANEA

GOING UNDERGROUND

GALLIC DREAD
MONARCH
BAYONNE'S CLOSE-KNIT DOOM CREW HEAD FOR THE OUTER LIMITS

MIDGARDSBLOT FESTIVAL
GAAHLS WYRD AND SOLSTAFIR ENTER SACRED GROUND

UFOMAMMUT
SLUDGE/PSYCH HEROES HIT THE INFINITY DRIVE

NIBIRU
OCCULT ITALIANS INVOKE THE GODS OF KHAOS

SUBTERRANEA
GOING UNDERGROUND

VIVA FOREVER

By turns harrowing and haunting, Monarch's 15-year journey to the outskirts of the human psyche has made them one of the most revered bands in the doom underground

WORDS: CHRIS CHANTLER

"We have a strange bond that unites us; a very, very strong bond that I think is indestructible," muses Monarch vocalist Emilie Bresson, explaining the extra levels of discipline and chemistry that have made this enigmatic French quintet a prolific and distinctive rising force in the extreme doom underground for 15 years. But Monarch's singular dynamic goes beyond the sort of near-psychic interplay that a band needs to navigate eight albums and multiple splits and EPs of ultra-long sludge-drone dirges.

"I dated Shiran [Kaïdine], our guitar player, for two years, and I dated Michell [Bidegain], our bass player, for 10 years, and now we're all best friends – more than friends, we're like brothers and sisters. I couldn't live without them. I can always rely on them, and that will be the case forever. We know how each other thinks, we can finish each other's sentences. It's a weird relationship; when new people come in it takes them time to get used to how we are together, and to find their own place in the band. But in the end we're all like a bunch of kids hanging out together, making jokes. The way we are together has nothing to do with the kind of music that we play; we laugh a lot, we're happy together, but we all know that everyone has a dark side, and it needs to come out."

"THERE'S NO POINT DOING THIS SORT OF MUSIC IF YOU DON'T HURT YOURSELF A LITTLE BIT"

FOR EMILIE, THERE'S NO SATISFACTION WITHOUT SUFFERING

Many may be bamboozled by this very Gallic intimacy and openness, British minds doubtless boggling at the prospect of regularly spending long hours in rehearsal rooms, studios, dressing rooms, hotel rooms and tour vans with your ex and her ex. However, Emilie owes her entire musical self-realisation to an incident of verbal aggression against her future bandmates, so maybe they got that out of the way early.

"I met the guys in high school when we were 18; they were in a fastcore band called Tetsuo at the time," she recalls. "One day I was very angry and I screamed at them, and instead of screaming back they said, 'Do you want to sing in our band?' That's what happened! So I went to practice and started screaming. And I *loved* it!" Emilie emphasises. "It was a catharsis, I could express all the things I felt inside, in a way that worked for me."

Soon the high school band were introducing sludgier elements into their blasting power violence, influenced by slow'n'low cult trailblazers such as Noothgrush, Corrupted and Thergothon. Eventually these urges took them over, so the three key musicians formed a new devoted doom band, smartly choosing one of those innately great band names, like Emperor or Queen, dripping with regal grandiosity ("It's a reference to Project Monarch," explains Emilie. "Later we thought it would also be nice because of the butterfly, but mainly it was about the secret mind-control project that the CIA did in the 50s and 60s. I don't know if it's true or not, but it's scary!" – see sidebar on p.118).

In Monarch's case, those elitist connotations were largely ironic: "We were basically punks, we wanted to make music our own way, without paying attention to anything else. And that's still the case; when we wrote the new album, we were in exactly the same state of mind. We are still punks, and we still don't care what other people think. It's good when people like what you do, it means the feeling you're trying to express has touched somebody. But it's more important to express ourselves, and that's still what drives us today; there is something that has to be purged from our inner selves."

This attitude is something bands often boast of, even if they enjoy universal adulation, but for Monarch that bloody-minded self-assertion underwent years of rigorous stress-testing.

"When we started, people hated us," Emilie affirms. "There was no audience in France, very few people even knew this kind of music. We often played to two people, and they'd throw cans of beer at us, or they'd come onstage and explain that we sucked. Now it's very different. It has evolved in a good way, we've found an audience and more people are into this kind of music now. I don't know if doom is fashionable, but we don't lose so much money anymore! I think we're on a path that goes somewhere. We don't know yet where it's going to take us, but we're just letting ourselves go."

Emilie confesses that Monarch don't practice often ("We're very disorganised people," she intones. "We do it when we have to!"), but since their 2004 demo, barely a year has gone by without at least one Monarch release of some sort. "We never want to let too much time pass before we do something," Emilie explains. "It's a very, very, very important thing to us, we couldn't live without it."

The band have thus evolved a process of

SUBTERRANEA
GOING UNDERGROUND

Monarch (left to right): Stéphane Miollan, David Hemery, Emilie Bresson, MicHell Bidegain, Shiran Kaïdine

songwriting that enables them to create, learn and record on a regular basis – even during a period when the bandmates were scattered across the globe – with Emilie's vocals invariably improvised at the recording.

"Usually I have no idea what I'm going to do before I get to the studio," she reveals, "I never have time to compose my vocals; usually we're in a rush and it's a big mess because we didn't practice soon enough. But it works. It's like it's already there, you just have to let go. I listen to the music so I have it in my mind, but I don't write down anything precise, I just carry it in me. Sometimes it's horrible, because I cry, I'm like, 'I suck! I have a bad voice! I've no idea what I'm doing…' I'm basically a nightmare for sound engineers!" she laughs. "I also listen to other music; this time I listened to Swans' *My Father Will Guide Me Up A Rope To The Sky* and *The Seer* a lot before recording this. Every album has its own influences."

There seems to be a greater element of raw melancholy explored throughout new album *Never Forever*, compared with the cryptic, alien monoliths explored on 2014's *Sabbracadaver*. Emilie insists that these distinctions weren't a conscious part of the process, but you can hear her trepidation when she discusses a throat injury that she suffered in 2015: "I was really scared that I would have to stop forever. I knew I needed to take a break, but I didn't want to. I have no technique at all, I just scream as loud as I can. I never took a singing lesson. I should, because I'm hurting my vocal cords over time, but I feel if I take lessons it will be less sincere. I don't know, but there's no point doing this sort of music if you don't hurt yourself a little bit."

This self-destructive conviction helps *Never Forever* capture the transgressive extremity and emotional force that gave this music such a devastating edge in the first place, as does Monarch's never-stronger dynamic flow. The passages of heartbreaking beauty and tender fragility serve to intensify the bleak and brutal surrounding doom, making for a far more satisfying, rounded experience than the standard one-dimensional sludge trudge.

"In an artistic way, those contrasts make it more interesting and powerful," agrees Emilie. "It's always a good idea for there to be a hint of hope, to make you realise how bad the rest of the situation is. You can't see that you're in the dark if you have never seen the light." ✠

"WE'RE STILL PUNKS, AND WE STILL DON'T CARE WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK"

EMILIE ON WHY MONARCH ARE DETERMINED TO FOLLOW THEIR OWN HADEAN PATH

***NEVER FOREVER* IS RELEASED ON SEPTEMBER 22 VIA PROFOUND LORE**

PROJECT MONARCH

HOW'S *THIS* FOR A CONSPIRACY?

The trauma-based Illuminati mind-control project codenamed Monarch – originally hatched by merciless Nazi 'Angel Of Death' Dr Josef Mengele and later developed by the CIA as a strand of its MKUltra project, possibly in cahoots with a famous cartoon baron – is surely the most bizarre, dark, terrifying and entertaining conspiracy theory of them all. Harrowing (and, it must be said, unsubstantiated) tales have been told of abducted children subjected to horrific experiments involving Satanic ritual abuse, electroshocks, LSD, incest, torture and binge-watching Disney movies in order to inflict multiple personality disorders and implant impulses into their dissociated minds that could be hypnotically activated to carry out evil deeds. Some alleged 'Monarch slaves', like Lee Harvey Oswald amd Charles Manson are programmed to kill, whereas others, like Marilyn Monroe and Britney Spears, are brainwashed sex robots. It's a world where all the best sex and death people work at Monarch HQ (run by blood-drinking shapeshifters), where the decor is all all-seeing eyes, Baphomets and Mickey Mouse ears.

Seemingly, the sole source for the existence of Project Monarch remains the lurid 1995 book *Trance Formation Of America* by Cathy O'Brien, a self-styled 'MKUltra Mind Control Survivor Whistleblower'. Among many hair-raising allegations, she claims that her vagina was carved into the shape of a Baphomet and orally manipulated by Hillary Clinton. Many have criticised the book for its lack of hard evidence.

As to Project Monarch's ultimate purpose? Ah, er, well, possibly to prepare Earth for the arrival of a New World Order of sadistic space reptiles, or something.

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OLD-SCHOOL, PROTO-BLACK BRILLIANCE!

ORDER

Former Mayhem members burrow into an alternative history

WORDS: DOM LAWSON

When people speak of old-school black metal, what they generally mean is the scene that emerged from Oslo in the wake of Mayhem's earliest efforts. Before that, of course, the tag was used widely and broadly, encompassing everything from Slayer and Celtic Frost to Devastation and Nunslaughter. And it is *that* transformative era in underground metal history that informs the monstrous music of Order. Formed by ex-Cadaver mastermind Anders Odden in 2013, what began as an exercise in nostalgia mutated into something far more destructive.

"The masterplan was to create a band consisting of the original dudes who played extreme metal in Norway before the whole 'Norwegian black metal' era took place," Anders explains. "I'd written a synopsis for a fiction movie about the early days of the Norwegian scene and sold it to a film production company. To make genuine new music for the movie, I wanted to combine my old friends from the first Mayhem line-up, Manheim and Messiah, with my old pal Rene who played bass on the first Cadaver LP in 1990 [and who sadly passed away in 2014]. I thought, 'What if we had started this band in 1987 when Manheim and Messiah left Mayhem? What would our own material sound like at that point in time?'"

The answer to that question is brutally hammered home on Order's long-awaited debut album, *Lex Amentiae*. A furious, grotesque eruption of old-school riffing, it really does sound like some great, lost album from 1987, albeit with enough contemporary heft to allay fears that this is a purely wistful exercise. That said, Anders and his comrades plainly hold the glory days of metal's mid-to-late 80s in the highest esteem.

"I think our generation was the last to truly identify our whole existence through music," he says. "We were so into it nothing else mattered to us at all. Back then, all the bands sounded different from each other and new ways of doing things took people to new, interesting places all the time. I remember a compilation called *Speed Kills I*, which had a profound impact on me. I got into Exodus, Metallica, Slayer, Venom, Voivod, Celtic Frost, Destruction and Possessed at the same time! From that moment I knew this was my music and that it would be my life companion. It's where all my inspiration comes from. It's in our DNA."

Despite significant commitments as live bassist with Satyricon, Anders insists that Order have grand plans to hit the road in the near future. A second album may emerge before touring starts in earnest, but having reconnected with the music that changed his life, this diehard purveyor of arcane extremity has no intention of stopping.

"This band is sacred to us. We are all veterans, but when we play it's like nothing has changed. We answer to no one. We get inspiration from the idea of making music together – not other bands or current music trends. It's kind of the same thing we did back in the day, but there is not much coming out now that we really like in metal. I guess that's why we feel more free." ✠

> "This band is sacred to us"
> **ANDERS ODDEN**

LINE-UP: Eirik 'Messiah' Norheim (vocals), Kjetil Esten Haraldsson Manheim (drums), Anders Odden (guitar), Stu Manx (bass)
HOME TOWN: Oslo, Norway
SOUNDS LIKE: Frost-fuelled, insidiously atmosphere-drenched metal filth saluting black metal's multifarious genesis.
FOR FANS OF: Celtic Frost, Mayhem, Bathory
CURRENT RELEASE: *Lex Amentiae* (Listenable, 2017)
WEBSITE: www.facebook.com/orderofficial

Altarage always look on the bleak side of life

RETCH-INDUCING DM WHORLS!

ALTARAGE

Spanish misanthropists hit negative mass

WORDS: DOM LAWSON

One of underground metal's most enduring preoccupations is with the creation of music that somehow conjures new, darker shades of black. As death metal grinds inexorably forward, no one is making music as wilfully terrifying and sonically dense as Bilbao's Altarage. Swiftly following up their remorselessly bleak 2016 debut *Nihl* with *Endinghent*, an even more devastating collection of hellish hypno-death, the Spaniards are clearly not here to spread peace and love.

"This world is going down the drain every new minute and you can do nothing," says a nameless representative. "There's no hope! Effectively, this is a purge. There is no good and evil, just a long walk to the end, along the monochromatic Eksis."

Although motivated by dismay at the state of humanity and bereft of optimism, Altarage are doing some bold and exciting things with death metal. *Endinghent* shares as much DNA with Meshuggah's polyrhythmic squall as they do with Portal or Ulcerate, and it's within that blurring of subgenre boundaries that the true extremity and quasi-Lovecraftian surrealism of the band's sound emerges.

"We didn't have a masterplan. We aimed to do something *we* would be pleased with, moulding the songs until we got the end result. The sound is just *us*. There are flickers of dark light in the music for sure. Pitch-black, shitty albums are legion. Our language is more diverse than that, retaining the bizarre brutality intact."

Their vision may be wholly misanthropic, but there is evidence in Altarage's music that a positive energy is coursing through their veins. If it is possible to find true catharsis through heavy music, and liberation from life's slow trudge towards the abyss, Altarage are far closer to unearthing it than most. With a third album already written, this journey through Hell is only just beginning. Be afraid, by all means, but be thrilled too.

"We hope to be going out there to spit this venom everywhere," they avow. "To spread the plague wherever is possible." ✠

LINE-UP: Altarage, in enigmatically occult fashion, prefer to remain anonymous
HOME TOWN: Bilbao, Spain
SOUNDS LIKE: A swirling, claustrophobic vortex of angular, churning death metal
FOR FANS OF: Gorguts, Meshuggah, Ulcerate
CURRENT RELEASE: *Endinghent* (Season Of Mist, 2017)
WEBSITE: www.facebook.com/altarage

Big | Brave bring a quiet intensity

ATMOSPHERIC, POST-ROCK RUMINATIONS!

BIG | BRAVE

Canadian noise trio enjoys the silence

WORDS: CHRISTINA WENIG

In a realm of reverb and distortion, silence is often far more powerful and deafening than sheer noise. Montreal-based three-piece Big | Brave have made this knowledge the core of their musical output. After forming in 2012, the band realised that a constant maximum of sound doesn't equal a maximum of intensity. "A lot of the silence and reduction we use is about building tension," explain the band collectively. "It's great to try to captivate a listener and then suddenly startle them. Playing with these feelings is beyond aural, which makes the experience a multi-layered one."

Creating a minimalistic yet intense sound that creeps around post-rock, alternative, sludge and noise, the outfit takes its brute force from dynamics and their own momentum. Playing with only basic reverb and overdrive effects, guitarists Robin Wattie and Mathieu Ball reel around their amps, translating their sound into movement and back into sound again. "What we strive for is using our instruments in ways that differ from what is usually done with them," they say. "You don't necessarily have to use new technologies to make new sounds and to have new ways of thinking about music, it just requires a little time and creativity with the tools that are already in your shed."

Additionally to the constant feedback of churning guitars and sparse drums that eschew established musical patterns, Wattie's voice adds another layer of urgency and feeling. "I approach vocals, lyrics and melodies the same way I do the guitar – as an instrument," she states. With their new album, *Ardor*, the Canadians push their experimentations even further, testing their listeners' perseverance with songs well over 10 minutes long. "While writing, we've gradually been more and more interested in constructing long, detailed narratives instead of straight-up band songs," the members explain. "It's great to be able to break out of the standard song structure that is imbedded in all of us." ✠

LINE-UP: Robin Wattie (vocals, guitar), Mathieu Ball (guitar), Louis-Alexandre Beauregard (drums)
HOME TOWN: Montreal, Canada
SOUNDS LIKE: Monolithic and haunting post-rock darkness for the post-apocalypse
FOR FANS OF: Boris, Fvnerals, Marriages, King Woman
CURRENT RELEASE: *Ardor* (Southern Lord, 2017)
WEBSITE: www.bigbrave.ca

Nibiru: either the last thing you see before you die, or the next

Nibiru

Qaal Babylon

ARGONAUTA

Italian psychonauts firm up the portal to madness

ITALY'S RITUAL PSYCH doom scene appears to be frothing at the mouth at the moment. With Fuoco Fatuo's latest bad trip, *Backwater*, still ringing in our ears, and Ufomammut releasing their eighth album, who could imagine something even darker and stranger coming out of Italy in 2017? Nibiru have the added advantage of looking like genuinely dangerous and terrifying men, creeping out of the crumbling back-streets of Turin to expose the ugly darkness seething beneath that great cultural hub of Roman Catholic civilisation. The band have been obsessively employing ancient occult languages since 2013, frontman Ardath intoning words with meanings lost in time in an extraordinary variety of guttural ululations, eerie whispers, portentous croaks, desperate grunts, plaintive yells and shuddering gasps, while his satisfyingly barbed and rusty guitar tones reach their optimum form here. The drums are briskly hammered with tribal conviction, synth squalls ebb and flow with their own mad logic, while the bottom-end seems to dip in and out of a sucking black hole. The arrangements and dynamics have developed rapidly from their early hellish free-for-all to something far more disciplined and impactful, while still maintaining the spontaneous, uneasy atmosphere of intercepted broadcasts from an alien torture chamber. *Qaal Babylon*'s improved command of structure and pace give the songs a mysterious and unorthodox newfound narrative flow, moods and

visions dissolving and reshaping with a well-timed change of chord and tempo. It's an experience not unlike the dramatic unfolding of a giallo movie, the listener suddenly swept from a wistful reverie to a back-alley knife fight. There are moments of stillness, mounting trepidation and jolts of terror, neatly placed, such as the imperial blastbeat unloosed after eight minutes of *Faboan*'s transcendental plod, or the despondent, claustrophobic grind of *Bahal Gah* unexpectedly opening out to blissful wintry vistas in the last three of its 16 minutes. So, another immersive, hallucinogenic canvas from the Italian school, but Nibiru here reach new levels of full-blooded conviction and commitment to their own bizarre impulses. It has to be admired, even if the result does do your swede in.

8

FOR FANS OF: Esoteric, Oranssi Pazuzu, Yob

CHRIS CHANTLER

Acephalix

Decreation

20 BUCK SPIN

West Coast, death-devoted crustpunks head back to the Grave

It's a tradition that all the young Swedeath disciples – all of whom are determined to resurrect the original spirit of the Stockholm sound that emerged at the end of the 80s – have their own totems. For most, it's the brutish force of early Entombed. For others, it's Dismember's cruelty. But for Acephalix, it's all about Grave, more precisely their 1992 album *You'll Never See*, where the originators found the perfect balance in between brutality and slimy groove. As a part of a larger group of Bay Area former crustpunk warriors (Vastum, Necrot, Lawless, etc), sworn to the classic death metal sound, *Decreation* sounds like an exercise in style. However, it's one that Acephalix excel at, as they've fully digested its best bits – the rotten swing, the heavier-than-fuck guitar tone, the morbid harmonies – and then regurgitated them with the aid of gigantic meathooks and a big grim smile on their bloodied face.

7

FOR FANS OF: Grave, Bolt Thrower, Entombed

OLIVIER BADIN

Altarage

Endhinghent

SEASON OF MIST

Soul-choking black/death dynamics from a shadowy Spanish sect

Mysterious Spanish entity Altrarage return with their second full-length of sonically disorientating blackened death metal nightmare atmospherics. Boasting one of the most unique sounds of recent years, the band's swathing black waves of graphite soundscapes broil ever outwards, utilising the dissonance and spacious misery of the most dirgy funeral doom acts. Bolstered along with some speedy tremolo riffing to give it some semblance of clarity and navigation, *Endhinghent*'s speedier moments close the gap from more cavernous resonance to suffocatingly claustrophobic clamour. Altrarage have perfected the disturbing ability to totally immerse the listener and this is an album that demands time and focus to let yourself be swamped by its dimension-shifting black/death storm. Making the label leap from underground German stalwarts Iron Bonehead to Season Of Mist should give the band the exposure and the acclaim that *Endhinghent* rightly deserves.

8

FOR FANS OF: Irkallian Oracle, Triumvir Foul, Svarti Daudi

LIAM YATES

Archspire

Relentless Mutation

SEASON OF MIST

Well-honed tech-death with an aptitude for destruction

As accomplished and forward-thinking as most tech-death bands are, very few have had enough nous or clout to ensnare fans from even the heaviest end of the metal spectrum. While Canadian quintet Archspire should be admired for *Relentless Mutation*'s dazzling complexity and fiendish craft alone, the likes of catchy opener *Involuntary Doppelgänger* and the grim onslaught meets jazzy noodling of *The Mimic Well* have enough immediacy to latch onto. Most importantly, among the lightspeed runs and turns of pace are slabs of heaviness and well-aimed uppercuts to allow the progressive leaning title track its melodic introspection. Though the triggered drum sounds and synthetic feel of the guitars on *A Dark Horizontal* may grate, it complements the dystopian science fiction of the lyrics, while at a succinct 30 minutes the album packs in enough ideas without overstaying its welcome.

6

FOR FANS OF: Cryptopsy, The Faceless, Obscura

ADAM REES

Beneath
Ephemeris
UNIQUE LEADER

Icelandic death metal brutes start a subtle revolution

An underrated force in the modern death metal scene, Iceland's Beneath have been threatening to deliver a classic for a while now. *Ephemeris* may be marginally too straightforward to shatter any epochs, but the subtle details and skewed trimmings that started to leak through structural cracks in 2014's *The Barren Throne* are now flowing thick and fast. There are a few hints that Beneath have aspirations beyond the ancient/modern death hybrid they continue to peddle brilliantly here. A tangible whiff of tech-metal ambience in *Eyecatcher*'s spiralling outro, a dash of post-punk menace underscoring *Alignments*' bleak squall and several moments of strident melody all help to sustain a sense of progressive fervour amid the reassuring thud of shrewdly refreshed Bolt Thrower-isms and countless bursts of spine-jarring, post-Behemoth blastbeats. This is top-of-the-range brutality. **8**

FOR FANS OF: Behemoth, Firespawn, Suffocation

DOM LAWSON

Big | Brave
Ardor
SOUTHERN LORD

Sparse yet emotionally charged atmospherics from Montreal

Minimalism isn't a term often attributed to bands gracing these pages, yet it's the most fitting concept with which to approach the disarming repose of Montreal trio Big | Brave's third album. A line-up consisting of two guitarists and a drummer lends a simple urgency to their muted melancholy, vocalist Robin Wattie's plaintive emoting akin to the otherness of Björk, channelling power from beguiling vulnerability. Considerably more downbeat than 2015's *Au De La*, *Ardor*'s 30-minute runtime is divided across only two tracks, the weak heartbeat of *Lull* barely sustained by blunted guitars and minimal percussion, only to deliver the full impact of its constantly teased weight in its closing minutes. *Borer* is more abrasive, providing constant variations upon an abruptly simplistic theme, keeping it simple a ploy that fully focuses their fraught emotion and demands your empathy. **7**

FOR FANS OF: Marriages, True Widow, Sunn O)))

TOM O'BOYLE

Evil
Rites Of Evil
NUCLEAR WAR NOW!

Dirty Japanese thrash with power and pedigree

There's always been a fine line between potent homage and pointless pastiche, but there's no mistaking the real, snottily atavistic deal when you hear it. Evil are a thrash metal band in the original sense of the term; this is old-school heavy metal delivered at breakneck speed and with the omnipresent stench of cheap vodka and piss-rusty bullet-belts ensuring that the past is alive and well in the present. Proud students of Possessed, Venom and Bathory, this Japanese trio know that *Hell Awaits* is a much better album than *God Hates Us All* and that Motörhead were the greatest punk rock band of all time. Raw but punchier than a lot of self-consciously retro speed metal, *Rites...*is aimed squarely at the cult metal nostalgia set, but more broad-minded thrash fanatics are strongly advised to check this out, too. **8**

FOR FANS OF: Bathory, Kreator, Nifelheim

DOM LAWSON

Five The Hierophant
Over Phlegethon
DARK ESSENCE

British avant-instrumentalists invite you to take a leap of faith

This multi-instrumental avant assault owes as much to the jazz fusion of Mahavishnu Orchestra as it does to the doom metal powering its permanent heft. *Queen Over Phlegethon*'s sharp, percussive groove is the start of a trip through shimmering, psychedelic environs. *Der Geist Der Stets Verneint* is a carnivalesque nightmare, rewarding your perseverance with the record's apocalyptically swaggering highpoint. It's a rare spike of coherent energy amid multi-layered, diffuse atmospheres, paying off on a potential you may feel the band are yet to fully fulfil. On *Omen Tree* the album's ritualistic atmosphere takes centre stage – a conclusion that leaves you unsure as to whether Five The Hierophant have led you to the spiritual revelation they promised or tricked you into a labyrinthine purgatory. **7**

FOR FANS OF: Aluk Todolo, Oranssi Pazuzu, Ephel Duath

TOM O'BOYLE

Unsane have their own version of a vans tour

Unsane
Sterilize
SOUTHERN LORD

Noise rock overlords reassert their grim authority

SHOULD YOU WANT to hear music that sounds like a terrifying midnight sprint through an alien city as all manner of monsters and maniacs snap at your heels, singer/guitarist Chris Spencer and his loyal henchmen, bassist Dave Curran and powerhouse drummer Vincent Signorelli, are still very much your men. *Sterilize* arrives in the nick of time, as the American Dream is lazily torched by fuckwits; never has Unsane's music felt more apt or more in tune with the Western world's mounting, disgruntled paranoia and division. It certainly helps that *Sterilize* is a full-blooded return to the classic, remorseless sound that made albums like 1998's *Occupational Hazard* and 2005's *Blood Run* so compelling. In contrast with the scattershot diversity of 2012's *Wreck* album, the band's eighth full-length is essentially one huge streamlined slab of rampaging hate rock; Curran and Signorelli remain one of the most destructive rhythm sections in heavy music and as they batter and crunch their way through the vicious *No Reprieve*, the flailing, desperate *A Slow Reaction* and the bristling, punchdrunk trawl that is album closer *Avail*, Chris Spencer sounds audibly motivated by their intensity. His vocals have never sounded more incensed nor his guitar playing more brilliantly chaotic and wild. An undeniable return to top form *and* a superb entry point for the uninitiated, *Sterilize* will make you hate again. **8**

FOR FANS OF: Converge, KEN Mode, Code Orange

DOM LAWSON

Original Sins A CLASSIC ALBUM FROM THE DARKEST VAULT

Death SS *In Death Of Steve Sylvester*
METAL MASTER 1988

Newly reissued by Shadow Kingdom, this peculiar platter from 1988 – simultaneously a debut LP and a long-awaited comeback after a series of demos and an EP – is arguably the best introduction to Italy's most notorious, eccentric 80s metal band, who were actually active as early as 1977. With an obsessive devotion to horror bordering on derangement (bandmates dressed as The Vampire, The Mummy, The Werewolf and Death, each getting their own theme song here) and a passionate blend of epic heavy metal, trippy occult doom, shock rock theatrics and proto-black metal posturing, Death SS were a shadowy missing link in metal's tapestry, making King Diamond look like Dame Vera Lynn.

Ufomammut are aiming for the symbol life

Ufomammut

8

NEUROT RECORDINGS

Italy's astral doom trio go beyond all bounds

THE CELESTIAL PULSE of Hawkwind and Pink Floyd, quickened by the circular, rhythmic thrust of Can and Neu!, have, for almost two decades, sent Ufomammut's Sabbathian riffage straight towards the cosmos. Their latest odyssey, titled *8* but metaphorically aligned to the infinity symbol, is presented as an ouroboric form, its eight songs acting in singular force – much like 2010's meditation on the origins of humankind, *Eve*. Recorded live with overdubs for mantric vocals, synths and minor embellishments, Ufomammut have never come as close to capturing their stentorian live sound in the studio as they have here. Time and space are warped through the massive reverberations of opener *Babel*, as its need for velocity eventually consumes its contemplative passages. *Zodiac*'s gnashing riffs also benefit from the magickal live energy. However, it's the titanic tandem of *Fatum* and *Prismaze*, both replete with Sleep-bong-huffing-with-Helmet syncopations, which hit the hardest. This leads to the nightmarish pummel of *Core*, where tension is wielded like a weapon by musicians who are naturally attuned to different sonic and spiritual frequencies than most. Evidently, Ufomammut's shamanistic understanding of groove and tonality continues to improve with each passing album. As *8* assimilates, another interesting revelation is how the Italian trio occasionally allow you to melt into a mesmeric groove aided by astral electronics only for them to swiftly change direction with startling momentum. This is best exemplified by the mid-point jolt of closer *Psyrcle*, one of the more disorientating and heady tracks of their lengthy history. Such subtle sleights of hand, together with immersive songwriting, will keep you fixated and maintain Ufomammut's standing as leading figures for unearthing metaphysical pathways through the tranformative power of psychedelic doom.

8

FOR FANS OF: Yob, Hawkwind, Conan

DEAN BROWN

Implore

Subjugate

CENTURY MEDIA

Bleak but brilliant crust-infused DM from Italian n'erdowells

In eyeballing the logo and artwork gracing the cover of this quartet's second full-length, you wouldn't be condemned to the gallows for assuming frosty black metal was the order of the day. To the contrary, a powerful wall of crust-infused, punk-speckled, Swedish death metal subverts the imagery and assaults the ears. Guitarist/vocalist/lone original member, Gabriel Dubko was obviously reared on all of the above and, by default, the HM-2 pedal, which has resulted in him leading his charges along a dizzying (left-hand) path of majestically massive guitar riffs and emotional vocal discharge augmented by drummer Guido Montanarini's linear, but peppy, take on the classic d-beat, thrashing two-beats and grinding blasts. The results are songs like *Paradox*, and *Totalitarian*, which, despite their bleak misery, will be difficult for anyone listening to get out of their heads.

7

FOR FANS OF: Trap Them, Converge, Black Breath

CONNIE GORDON

Kadavar

Rough Times

NUCLEAR BLAST

Berlin's hirsute retro-rockers get down and get high

After touring almost constantly since the band's inception, German diehards Kadavar have developed into one of the most reliable and consistent bands currently sucking in the 70s sounds of the psych and hard rock's heyday. *Rough Times*, the band's fourth outing, returns to the band's dirtier, fuzzed-out and heavier roots, which their previous album, *Berlin*, had jettisoned in favour of a more cleanly produced, accessible and sunny cheer. The album's title is a reflection of the band's chaotic lifestyle on the road as well as the current state of the world, and this harder, heady sound reflects the title perfectly. *Rough Times* is a cosmic collection of darkly drugged-out, grooving swagger, searing fuzz and delicately lysergic, Krautrock-inspired astral travel, showcasing the band's maturity and progression to higher realms of 'kosmiche' musik.

8

FOR FANS OF: Hawkwind, Grand Funk, Amon Düül II

LIAM YATES

Monarch

Never Forever

PROFOUND LORE

Funeral doom infused with a haunting Gallic wonder

Monarch's spellbinding electro-doom is not for the faint-hearted and here, on their eighth album in as many years, the French quintet take sludge to new dimensions. *Never Forever* is a haunting work whose long, droning soundscapes curl around Emilie Bresson's unnerving voice – which switches between ethereal and wildly aggressive. Opener *Of Night, With Knives* weaves echoing vocals through sparse drums and crunchy, weighty guitars, the palpable malevolence, despite lighter moments, giving the song space to breathe. The serenity lasts for mere seconds and soon the track builds back into towering movements that juxtapose screams against sweetly sorrowful harmonies. Later, *Cadaverine* swims in gorgeous vocals and funereal progression on its path to finality while *Diamant Noir* offers a harrowing lesson in beautifully abject misery.

8

FOR FANS OF: Thou, Bismuth, Corrupted

CHERYL CARTER

Overoth

The Forgotten Tome

HOSTILE MEDIA

Irish death metallers scratch a seven-year itch

Belfast's Overoth formed over a decade ago as an old-school death metal outfit, the band playing competently but fairly straight down the line and offering few surprises. It's been a whopping seven years since their last release, debut album *Kingdom Of Shadows*, and the time away has resulted in resulted in a new sound and aesthetic. *The Forgotten Tome* is, above all, a very ambitious album, carefully constructed and not afraid to draw from different sources in order to create as powerful a sound as possible. With a fair few injections of symphonic/keyboard elements and a large and relatively clean production, *The Forgotten Tome* boasts a considerable swagger, the mid-paced songs harnessing contemporary black and death metal overtones while still managing to maintain that more technical old-school death metal foundation beneath it all.

7

FOR FANS OF: Diabolical, Morbid Angel, Fleshgod Apocalypse

DAYAL PATTERSON

First Album I Bought

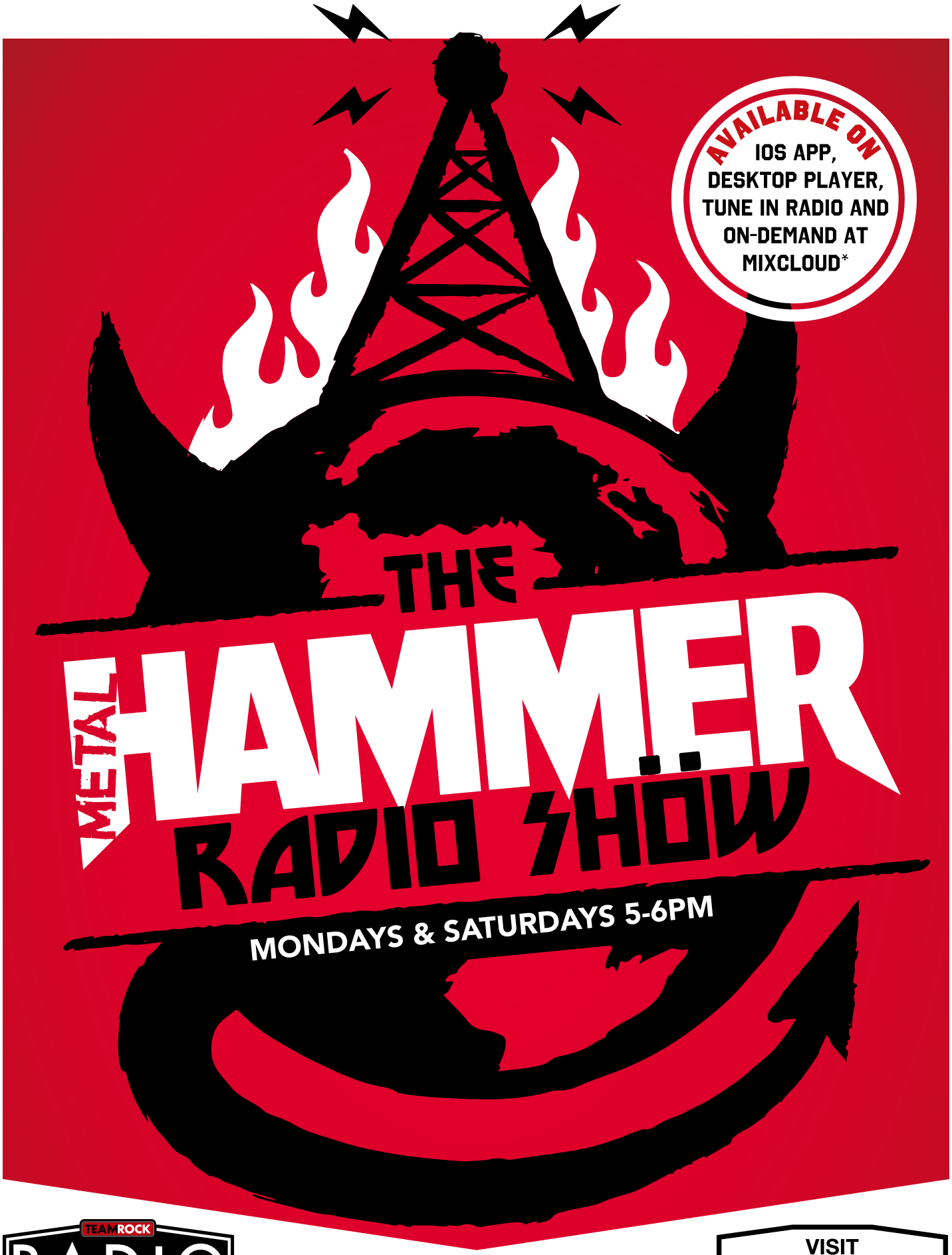
GIUSEPPE CUTISPOTO

Corpsing

OZZY OSBOURNE

Tribute

"I absolutely love the cover of this album because it's totally in honour of my guitar hero, Randy Rhoads. The classic image of Ozzy lifting Randy up in the air like he's saying, 'This man is the fucking dog's bollocks' is the perfect cover to a perfect live album."



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Chelsea Wolfe: the shape of singer/songwriters to come

Chelsea Wolfe

Hiss Spun

SARGENT HOUSE

California's scintillating chanteuse confronts her demons

EXISTENTIAL ANGST RADIATES from Chelsea Wolfe. She reveals a palpable discomfort when attention is focused upon her that is doubtless magnified internally; agonies with which we can all identify when trying to make sense of the chaos in the world around us. Seldom posing in front of a camera without shrouding her face in some way, she is portrayed backed into a corner on the cover of her sixth album *Hiss Spun*, ready to pounce – all wild things being at their most dangerous when in such a vulnerable position. And pounce she does, with her heaviest and most aggressive soundscapes yet, aided throughout by Queens Of The Stone Age guitarist Troy van Leeuwen, further increasing the distance from her folk roots. Troy makes an instant impact, lending sultry riffs and eerie atonality to the disquiet of *16 Psyche*, where Chelsea is at her enchanting best. Sorrowful and brazen, her voice channels a will to fight, be that against the threats of the outside world or inner demons. *Vex*'s soothing opening falls eventually into disarray, exploding in the bellicose rage of Sumac/ex-Isis frontman Aaron Turner, his chasm-rending roar providing Chelsea's most overtly 'metal' moment to date. Bolstered by the production of Converge's Kurt Ballou, the effect is fearsome. The latter part of the record sees the return of electronic environs past, the pulsing patter of *Offering* soothing inflicted wounds, while *Two Spirit* transmits itself across gossamer-thin guitar strings and Chelsea's plaintive vocal. Previous album *Abyss* detailed her struggles with sleep paralysis; here Chelsea Wolfe is wide awake. She has weaponised her pain, continuing a very personal evolution, whose experimentations with and deviations from the world of metal prove just how brutally honest this music can be. *Hiss Spun* is a unifying experience, encouraging us all to stare down our demons.

8

FOR FANS OF: Darkher, Emma Ruth Rundle, Myrkur

TOM O'BOYLE

Pagan Altar

The Room Of Shadows

TEMPLE OF MYSTERY

Cult NWOBHM crew offer up a stunning epitaph

When Pagan Altar singer Terry Jones lost his battle against cancer two years ago, close to his 70th birthday, the task of finishing an album the band had been working on since 2006 was left to his son and guitarist, Alan. Against all odds, the final full-length from NWOBHM's most overlooked gems is as luminous and gracious as their early albums were dark and hopeless. Whereas part of Pagan Altar's formative charm lay in their rough production values, *The Room Of Shadows* is by far the band's richest and most melodic album to date, with dual harmonies aplenty and a genuine 70s sensibility, even if Terry Jones's vocals are more twangy than ever. Like Judas Priest before them Pagan Altar went on full-on leather'n'studs mode but with a more arcane and yet more unmistakably British bent. There's a name for this kind of metal: class.

8

FOR FANS OF: Judas Priest, Witchfinder General, Witchfynde

OLIVIER BADIN

Urarv

Aurum

SVART

Norwegian avant-extremity with a fearless black metal pedigree

Though a new project, Urarv feature the eccentric and creative vocals of Björn Aldrahn Dencker from Dødheimsgard and Thorns. Here he commands the focus as the busy and sometimes atonal bustle of guitars, bass and drums battle away behind him. The vibe is in the late 90s/early 00s Moonfog Records era – i.e: BM overtones with touches of thrash and death metal and a complex approach to songwriting. Despite that, *Aurum* proves to be a very organic affair, the prominent bass adding to the overal warmth of the album and the stripped-down composition of the songs (the band is a three-piece and there appear to be few overdubs). Sometimes it works, other times less so, making this a compelling but also a somewhat inconsistent debut.

6

FOR FANS OF: Dødheimsgard, Virus, The Deathtrip

DAYAL PATTERSON

Vacivus

Temple Of The Abyss

PROFOUND LORE

North East England death metal marauders utilise their scythes

UK death metal is in rude health, and Profound Lore have been attentively keeping their ears to the scabrous underbelly of the British scene as a means to discover future torchbearers. Their latest signing is Vacivus, a five-piece comprised of seasoned musicians schooled in the dark arts of the masters – particularly Morbid Angel's arcane rites – and clearly eager to compete in chaos with the likes of Lvcifyre, Grave Miasma and Dead Congregation. Their first full-length will surely put them on the same negative plane as their contemporaries. The summoning of old and new-school influences here is faultless; Vacivus's focus on constructing punishing riffs rarely succumbs to cob-webbed atmospheric sojourns. As a result, this single-minded approach keeps the devastation levels in the red – fundamental when spawning scorched-earth, riff-driven death metal.

7

FOR FANS OF: Lvcifyre, Cruciamentum, Morbid Angel

DEAN BROWN

Vulture Industries

Stranger Times

SEASON OF MIST

Nordic eccentrics open up an exhilarating new box of tricks

Since their 2007 debut, Bergen's Vulture Industries have revelled in the theatrical, eccentric, avant-garde territory that became a Norwegian phenomenon thanks to Arcturus, Ulver, Solefald and Fleurety. 2013's honed masterwork of carnivalesque prog metal, *The Tower*, was the most satisfying showcase for VI's singular strengths, but with their fourth album they've stripped it right down, developing a big arena rock itch that they have audible fun scratching. Openers *Tales Of Woe* and *As The World Burns* are some of the band's simplest, most accessible material, and while the heartfelt acoustic blues of *My Body, My Blood* and *Gentle Touch Of A Killer*'s declamatory doom churn make a versatile pairing, they maintain the album's more straightforward, uncluttered approach. While it doesn't ape the full pop trajectory of new Ulver, there's a similar exuberance, simplicity and lightness of touch invigorating the band's methodology, the ghost of Bowie hanging discreetly over the proceedings.

8

FOR FANS OF: Arcturus, Katatonia, Mr. Bungle

CHRIS CHANTLER

Inspirations From Beyond

DWID HELLION
Integrity

DANZIG
Danzig

"It's a perfect album. I can listen to it endlessly, and have done for nearly three decades. It's the perfect fusion of horror, punk, metal, rock and blues. I remember buying this album when it was released and it has continued to inspire and fascinate me ever since."

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Heilung guide you to the next level of consciousness

We really hope this isn't this dude's Tinder pic

Midgardsblot 2017

MIDGARD HISTORISK SENTER, BORRE

Sólstafir strike a perfect chord at Midgardsblot

There will be blood: Midgardsblot's opening blot ceremony

Unleash engage the warp drive

PICS: ROY BJØRGE & STIG PALLESEN

Sólstafir, Gaahls Wyrd and Heilung fuse history and revelation

THURSDAY

Crickets. It's not your typical festival sound, but the soft chirping sound coming from the woods bordering Midgardsblot's opening ceremony only deepens the otherworldliness of this unique festival. Officiated next to a reconstructed Gildehallen (Great Hall) by the two core members of folk/tribal free-for-all, Folket Bortafor Nordavinden – Benny a tall, rangy beacon of benevolence and Gustave, a wiry, wild-haired storyteller who looks like he's tumbled, Catweazle-like, from another age – the blot is an honouring of the Norse gods, offering sacrifices in return for good fortune, and more immediately, good weather (or at least, with wry pragmatism, "Whatever the gods deem appropriate!"). Encircled by period-clad torch bearers, drum-beaters and crowds of mostly attentive festival goers – a large number of whom have also come in their Thor's Day best – chants are offered to Freya and Odin before t-shirts, pendants and other personal trinkets are offered to a fire. The guests are also invited to anoint a statue of the gods with actual blood, make pronouncements to the spirits of their own choosing, and then smear that blood on their faces. Just outside is the quiet industry of a Viking village, beyond that the burial mounds of ancient kings, overlooking the Oslofjord. Everyone who takes up the offer invests the history around them with personal meaning.

This year, the village itself has its own stage hosting various beguiling auld-school folk bands, notably Eldrim, Byrdi, Virelai and Songleikr, but Former 3rd And The Mortal singer **KARI RUESLÅTTEN [5]** proves a strange choice for the Gildehallen's first musical offering. Despite the tender clarity of her voice, her far more modern take on folk feels out of place in this setting, and bland, too. That's not something you can say about **FOLKET BORTAFOR NORDAVINDEN [8]**, whose anarchic nature gives way to ribald celebration, thumping away on drums as a guest female vocalist lets loose a breathtaking, spirits-rousing wail and Benny gives a powerful, historically aware speech about cultural unity, adding another rallying cry as they all but blow the rafters off.

FRIDAY

With archery and axe-throwing lessons, various Viking tests of strength, site tours and historical seminars going on nearby, **NAN MADOL [7]** get the main stage going in gradual but expansive fashion, combining Southern-style doomy riffs with a Tool-esque metronomic pulse, as their drummer/vocalist helps put the band's collective back into their progression. Oslo's **SUPERLYNX [7]** keep the hypnotic vibe going, their doom/psych mantras driven by vocals that sound like Courtney Love in a trance state.

Upping the mood, **TENGGER CAVALRY [8]** frontman Nature Ganganbaigal's root-you-to-the-spot throat singing is just one part of a constantly groovy, melodic metal arsenal, a homemade two-string Tobshuur guitar beating out an infectious twang as they're joined by a shamanic Viking drummer in full, pelt-clad regalia for good measure. Proof that celebrating Viking heritage is synonymous with cultural exchange, **WINTERFYLLETH**'s **[8]** evocative Englishness fits perfectly in this setting with anthems so rousing that, for them, black metal seems more of a launch pad. Their signature *'Woah-oh*'s resonate across the field and down a mass of raised fists.

When it does come to black metal, though, **GAAHLS WYRD [9]** are as definitive and as transcendent as you can get, their level of consciousness-altering intensity akin to compressing your brain matter into diamond form. Joined briefly by Kati Ran on hurdy gurdy, and Darkend's Animæ on guest vocals Gaahl's otherworldly presence has a magnetism that draws something primal out of you, not least when *Steg* hits an electrifying motherlode and stays there, reverberating until you're spiritually ravished and then some. **UNLEASHED [8]** are on majestic form this evening, feeding their love of Norse mythology into thick, coursing waves of d-beat-charged death metal that sends the field into raptures.

SÓLSTAFIR [9] are worthy headliners and the anticipation building amongst a sea of metalheads only makes their continued absence from UK outdoor metal festivals an incomprehensible anomaly that needs to be remedied before it starts getting embarrassing. Tonight, under a setting sun, they're mesmerising, transporting, those lone, searchlight riffs cast out like a psychic liferaft. Sólstafir look like rock stars, but this is a communal experience, the likes of *Ótta* and *Necrologue*, following a moving speech about mental health and reaching out, tapping into a binding continuity that's the very spirit of this festival.

SATURDAY

To some extent, Saturday openers **SAHG [7]** are also a transformative experience, hauling up classic 70s riffs and giving them a transfusion that banishes any retro trappings. Combining symphonic, operatic and gothic metal into one turgid and utterly unconvincing morass, **SYNKVERVET [3]** are good only for bar takings. Such is the elemental and cosmic force of **ORANSSI PAZUZU**'s **[8]** mantric black metal overload, that they not only whip up a sudden gale and a plague of probably startled insects, one of their guitars gives up under the onslaught, leaving the rest of the members to jam their last two songs, journeying to the looser end of krautrock and beyond. Switching Apollyon to drums, **AURA NOIR [7]** love Motörhead, Celtic Frost and riding roughshod over your senses. They offer a clenched fist in the face of all higher functions and we're all the better, and far more drunk for it. As epic as **MOONSORROW**'s **[6]** folk-infused metal might be, their showmanship is an unnecessary, over-flamboyant gloss, and as it happens, utterly redundant in the face of what's to come.

If Guillermo Del Toro were to come up with a medieval pagan folk band, it probably wouldn't look, or sound, as mindboggling as **HEILUNG [9]**. On a stage bedecked like an elaborate, primitive initiation chamber and each member looking like an end-of-level spirit guide, the visual overload – complete with black paint-smeared, spear- and shield-wielding warriors – is matched by the ritualistic throb hammering a nail though your consciousness and down into some ancestral residue. By the end, the field has turned into a rave of the ancients, everyone lost in an hallucinatory journey past time, space and sanity.

Let it be said that Faroese headliners **TYR [6]** go down a storm, their epic yet efficient Viking metal offering a strident and romanticised call to arms. There is a simplistic quality to their songs, though, that takes a fast route around any genuinely emotional experience, but when a full field is pumping fists in the air, there's an energy afoot that charges these history-steeped fields anew.

JONATHAN SELZER

Gaahls Wyrd: do not have a staring contest with this man

Tengger Cavalry: Mongolese metal masters

Under a setting sun, Sólstafir are mesmerising

The Metal Test

Pitting your heroes against the test that really matters

WORDS: ALI COOPER

MARCUS BRIDGE

NORTHLANE

Marcus's girlfriend has a cat out of hell

WHAT'S THE MOST ILLEGAL THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?

"I got arrested for breaking into my high school when I was 16. We only broke into the canteen for snacks! I got kicked out and I moved to a different school, but in the end I much preferred my new school, so there's definitely a silver lining there." ✓

WHAT'S THE MOST METAL ALBUM YOU OWN?

"I'm not that metal, to be honest... I have Job For A Cowboy's *Doom* EP, which isn't necessarily my cup of tea but it's the most metal thing I own." ✗

WHAT'S THE WORST INJURY YOU'VE EVER HAD?

"When I was 10 years old, I had a cream soda bottle in the freezer that had completely frozen, so I got a knife to try and cut it out. The knife slipped and I sliced my hand open. When my mum came, I told her I was trying to climb through a broken window." ✗

WHAT'S THE MOST YOU'VE EVER BEEN SICK?

"I went to a birthday party in my last year of high school. I was pretty broke but there was a two-for-$10 offer on some South African white wine. That kind of offer is a bad start already, but I destroyed those bottles very quickly and had a pretty awful night afterwards." ✓

WHAT'S THE GROSSEST THING YOU'VE EVER HAD IN YOUR MOUTH?

"When I was three or four years old, I have this distinct memory of being at a family friend's house who had kids that were slightly older than me and my sister. This one girl told me to get really close to her and she farted right in my face and it was all in my mouth. To this day, that is the worst smell I've ever smelled and I threw up all over her bed." ✓

WHAT'S THE WORST FIGHT YOU'VE EVER BEEN IN?

"I've not been in too many fights, I'm a pretty good boy. I get in silly Twitter arguments though, does that count? Half the time it's a joke but I'm acting like I'm being mean. Sometimes people will call me out and I'll retweet them as a joke." ✗

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU BLED?

"Four days ago when I was at my girlfriend's house. I'm pretty sure her cat is bipolar, so I'll be petting her and just out of nowhere she'll snap and scratch me up. She got me pretty good this time. She'll walk away and come back in 10 minutes asking to be petted again." ✓

"I BROKE INTO MY OWN HIGH SCHOOL"

WHAT'S THE RAREST PIECE OF MERCHANDISE YOU OWN?

"I've got a friend named Colby, and one of our mates made up four or five shirts for his birthday with this crazy design for a made-up rap project Colby had. It's got his name and an outrageous design with his head on it. Nobody else has that so I have this crazy exclusive piece." ✓

WHAT'S YOUR MOST PAINFUL TATTOO OR PIERCING?

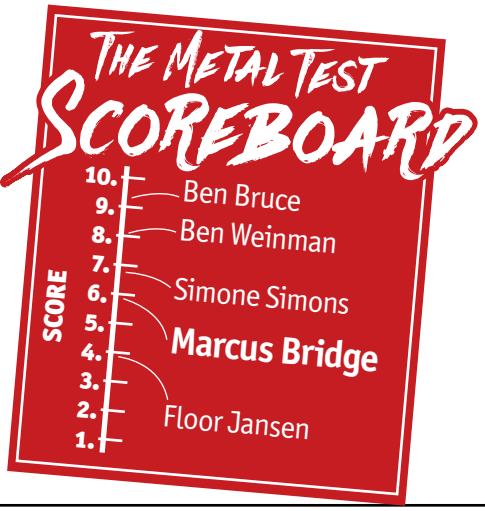
"I pierced my own lip when I was 15 – that really hurt. I just shoved a safety pin through it and closed it up and let it heal. I got weirded out halfway through though, and left it hanging there for a minute. But it's the one I've still got today, so I think I did a good job." ✗

WHAT'S THE MOST METAL PICTURE ON YOUR PHONE?

"It's kinda metal to me, this is a picture of these three wolves. One's a female protecting the male wolf, and the female appears to hide underneath the male pretending to be scared but she's actually covering his throat from the assailant. It's pretty metal because that female will really take that other wolf down." ✓

Wolves are probably the most metal animals in existence

FINAL SCORE: 6/10. NOT THE MOST EPIC SHOWING FROM MARCUS, BUT HE GETS BY THROUGH EATING FARTS AND WRESTLING CATS. FAIR PLAY, FELLA. *MESMER* IS OUT NOW VIA UNFD. NORTHLANE HIT THE UK THIS NOVEMBER



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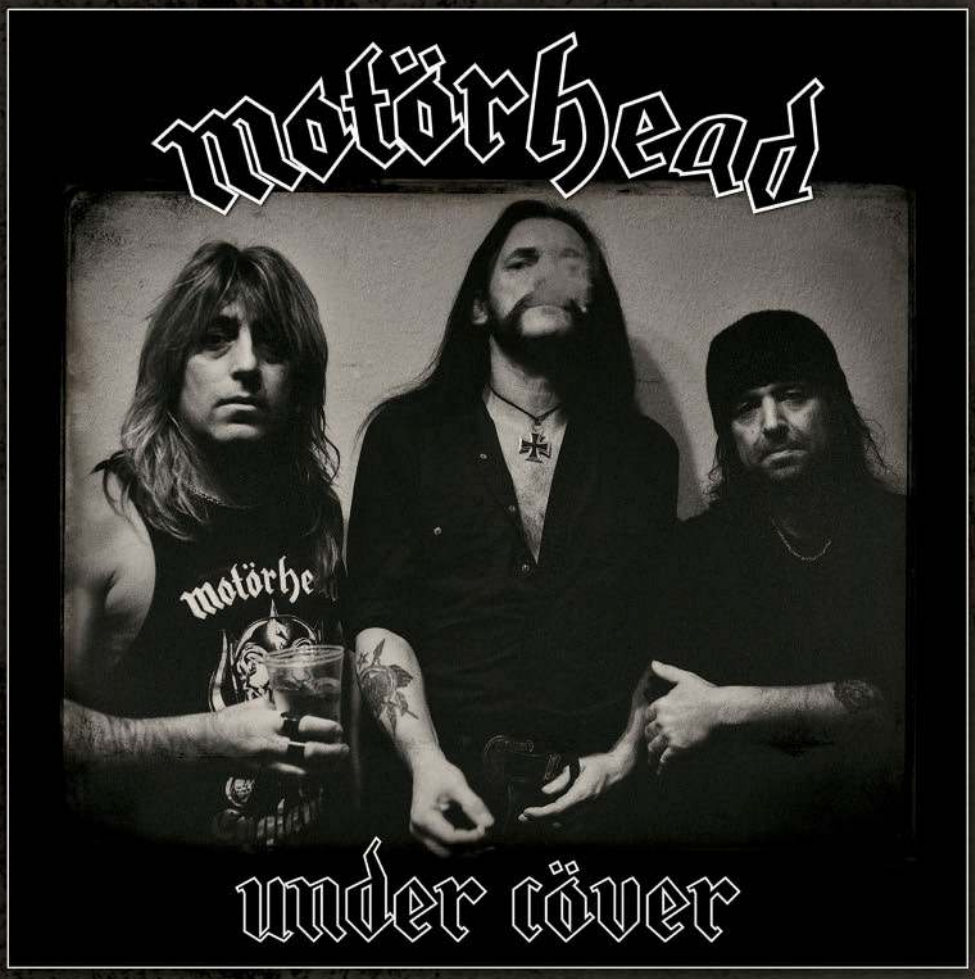

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